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THE ART OF SAUDI TRADITIONAL JEWELLERY:  
REJUVENATION FOR A CONTEMPORARY WORLD

A THESIS SUBMITTED FOR  
THE DEGREE OF THE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
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### **Declaration of Originality**

I, KHADEEJA ALTHAGAFI, hereby declare that the thesis here presented is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributable to other authors.

SIGNATURE:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'KHADEEJA ALTHAGAFI', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

DATE: 18/06/2018

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## **ABSTRACT**

This practice-led study investigates a new approach to the design and making of traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia. Jewellery is very much part of Saudi culture. This research has been prompted by my personal observations that as Saudi culture modernizes traditional jewellery is disappearing and being replaced by jewellery of Western fashion, especially by the younger generations. It is evident that the jewellery worn by Saudi women nowadays falls into one of two categories; traditional or modern. My work demonstrates that Saudi women can have the opportunity to wear jewellery related to their culture while still addressing the desire to move into a modern world. My approach was based on a study of traditional Saudi jewellery styles and techniques. I then experimented with creating new designs that better reflected modern jewellery aesthetics/forms but retained their cultural connections. As part of my study, I investigated two forms that are not found in traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia, the brooch and convertible or multipurpose jewellery that can be converted into a range of forms. I believe this is one way to break away from conventional traditional forms of jewellery making and widen the concept of wearable art. It is a way to show Saudi women that contemporary jewellery does not have to be 'Western' but can retain traditional elements and be distinctive, and which can be adapted to both traditional and contemporary forms of dress. Once this new approach finds its place in Saudi Arabia, it is hoped that it will become recognisable world-wide as a contemporary form of jewellery that connects with the present and also retains a resonance with its Saudi origins.

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## **Introduction and overview of the study**

*"Without tradition, art is a flock of sheep without a shepherd.  
Without innovation, it is a corpse."* **Winston Churchill**,  
British statesman (1874-1965)

## **Introduction**

Traditional arts in all of their forms reflect the cultural life of a group of people living together in a community in any particular part of the world. Group members usually share the same heritage and principles. They may also share, in some measure, some artistic norms in terms of what they appreciate in what they wear and, of course, in other life related issues. Therefore, they seem to set certain standards that are handed down from one generation to another. This exegesis focuses on jewellery, a traditional art form in the Middle East and Arabian Peninsula, a region with rich and complex historical and cultural traditions. These attributes of generational traditions that blend historical and cultural elements can be seen in the styles and techniques of the jewellery made and worn in those regions.

Through my work, I aim to show that jewellery worn by women in Saudi Arabia today could be one of the strongest ties to the past and can also reflect the challenging environment, faith and values of its people. That is, to prove that Saudi women can have the opportunity to wear jewellery, which can be related to their

culture and, therefore, reflect their identity. I believe it is important that we appreciate the significance of tradition in relation to art for a number of reasons. Tradition associates art with a certain time and place. It serves the purpose of informing generations of the way things took place. Tradition keeps art alive and helps maintain it in a form that is meaningful to the artist, the viewer, and wearer. Looking at traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia, one can say that tradition played a key role in the development of this art form, which allows designs to be readily adaptable so the jewellery is appropriate for different cultural circumstances, such as marital status, economic circumstances, social position and religious affiliation.

I consider my work to be pioneering, as it examines the history of traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia; analyses the making of this type of jewellery; and develops and introduces a new approach to jewellery making in Saudi Arabia. This approach introduces new designs, materials and techniques for jewellery making. It will also explore jewellery types which did not previously exist in traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia. I included brooches to my collection, as brooches imported from Western countries are now becoming popular in the Saudi market. Therefore, I assume that brooches that reflect a Saudi identity, as proposed by my approach, will be received favourably. My approach will also introduce a new concept to traditional jewellery making in Saudi Arabia, which is the employment of multi-purpose or convertible jewellery. In my opinion, this is one way to reconsider the conventional traditional forms of jewellery making and widen the concept of wearable art. This will be a significant addition to traditional jewellery and will serve the purpose of my

research. It is a way to show jewellery in a fashion which is different than what is familiar to Saudi women. Once this new approach finds its place in Saudi Arabia, it is hoped that it will reach other parts of the world, given that the designs are presented from my viewpoint as a jewellery artist who is familiar with both the Saudi and the Western cultures. Thus, people will be able to learn more about traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia by means of my own personal perspective.

My study explores the relationship between traditional jewellery and jewellery that is worn these days by women in Saudi Arabia. It argues that the culture and traditions of a particular part of the world, including jewellery design and making, could be preserved, but at the same time borders between cultures could begin to slowly open up in terms of designs, techniques and materials used. That is because it can be said that the character of jewellery is very much associated with the designs, techniques and materials.

### **Overview of jewellery in Saudi Arabia**

There are a number of definitions of the word jewellery. For example, Unger, a Dutch researcher, asserts that jewellery is an object made from all kinds of precious materials with certain aesthetics that intend to beautify the human body.<sup>1</sup> She, then, introduces her own definition of a piece of jewellery. Unger suggests that a piece of jewellery is an object worn on the human body as a decorative and symbolic addition

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<sup>1</sup> Marjan Unger, *Jewellery in context*, (Leiden, University of Leiden, 2010), 7.

to the appearance.<sup>2</sup> As a jewellery artist and researcher, I tend to share the same opinion expressed in these definitions. In addition, I see that jewellery is linked to traditions of cultures and can be part of the wearer's identity.



**Figure 1** Traditional Saudi Jewellery (Bedouin Jewellery 2014).

The decoration of the body (e.g., body painting) and wearing of jewellery have mostly been used to enhance the beauty of the wearer or show status of some type – religious, marital, social, economical, ethnic background, etc. The well known archaeologist, Francesco d'Errico, affirms that the common factor among such ornaments is that they convey meaning to others.<sup>3</sup> He further states that these ornaments convey an image of a person which is not just their biological self.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>3</sup> Francesco d'Errico, "New model and its implications for the origin of writing" *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 5, no. 1, 1995, 13.



Accordingly, Ramljak stresses that jewellery is strongly related to symbolism and its usage entails a mature sense of identity.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula is rich in intricate silverworks that include bits of coral, carnelian and pretty colourful stones picked up from the hills and sands during the Bedouin's wanderings.<sup>5</sup> It is generally large in scale and heavy in weight. While the detailed constructions can be quite elaborate, the designs themselves are generally fairly repetitive. Unfortunately, the above features lead to some disadvantages. The disadvantages of traditional jewellery observed include the following: it is not practical to wear because of its large size and heavy weight; it is not preferred to be worn today because it does not match modern clothes worn by most young Saudi girls and women; and the perceived unchanging nature of the designs make it out of step with contemporary tastes. As such, it is disappearing and in recent years is being replaced by more modern Western style jewellery, especially by the younger generation in cities of Saudi Arabia.<sup>6</sup> In addition, most of what remains of traditional jewellery is in the hands of private collectors and museums.<sup>7</sup> In Saudi Arabia, in particular, some silversmiths have already melted down some traditional jewellery pieces and recast the silver in new designs to meet demands for new styles of jewellery. Also, a woman's traditional silver jewellery is generally

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<sup>4</sup> Suzanne Ramljak, *Unique by design: Contemporary jewellery in the Donna Schneier Collection*, (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), 32.

<sup>5</sup> Claire Clemons, "Bangles from the Sands," *Saudi Aramco World* 24, no. 2, 1973, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Hussain Al-Hasan, *Traditional crafts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, (Riyadh, Najada Publishing House, 2007), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Clemons, "Bangles from the Sands," 14.

melted down upon her death, and without replacement by younger generations, Saudi Arabian traditional jewellery is slowly disappearing.

If we take a look at Saudi women since the foundation of Saudi Arabia in 1932 until today, we would realize that jewellery often represents their wealth and/or status. Many of them would have all of their jewellery pieces worn at all times, especially women living in small villages and towns. Saudi women receive their marriage dowry mostly in cash and jewellery forms. In addition, most women would use their cash savings to purchase jewellery pieces, as they are aware of the monetary value of their components (i.e., gold, silver, gold coins and/or silver coins). That is, jewellery is appreciated as an attractive personal possession, a symbol of status and a means of financial investment.<sup>8</sup> Scarce points out that the materials used in making jewellery reflect the financial and social class of the wearer.<sup>9</sup> She further emphasizes that the precious metals, such as gold and silver, were generally affordable by wealthy merchants and heads of tribes. In times of need, Saudi women often had their jewellery melted down by a silversmith and then sold.<sup>10</sup> This is still the case today.

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<sup>8</sup> Al-Hasan, *Traditional crafts*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> Jennifer Scarce, "The Middle East." In *Ethnic Jewellery*, by John Mack ed., (London, British Museum Publications Ltd, 1988), 47.

<sup>10</sup> Heather Ross, "The beauty of Bedouin jewelry." *Saudi Aramco World* 30, no. 2, 1979, 4.



**Figure 2** Samples of traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia (Ross 1998).

Traditional jewellery is still worn today by many Saudi women living in more rural areas. Many women who live in cities still wear traditional jewellery today; however, this is limited to weddings and other ceremonial and religious occasions rather than for everyday wear. This is justified because it is seen as part of the traditional dress, which continues to be worn in those special events. Hence, traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia today is perceived in two different ways. One, it retains its traditional role as an object of daily life in a section of society who are more removed from the modernisation of Saudi Arabia, and two, it has been bracketed as part of a traditional past by those living in the rapidly modernizing cities.

However, in modern cities of Saudi Arabia, jewellery retains a major role in women's dress and is used to enhance their appearance in a global world where beauty and fashion are seen to be important. Thus, it can be said that Saudi women

now possess jewellery for the following reasons: both their *monetary value and fashion* equally, for *monetary value* more than *fashion*, or for *fashion* more than *monetary value*. Older women, whether in remote areas or cities, would mostly appreciate the monetary value of their jewellery; middle aged women would mostly appreciate both the monetary value and fashion equally; and younger women would mostly appreciate the fashion.<sup>11</sup>

Turner argues that the traditional approaches to making jewellery worldwide are now being challenged, as there are contemporary works that react strongly against the norms of jewellery design and making.<sup>12</sup> That is, the boundaries and limitations of traditional jewellery making that were imposed on jewellers and wearers in the past have now started to disappear and will no longer hold back the talents of jewellery artists. Similarly, contemporary jewellery is a rich craft discipline that seeks to widen jewellery notions by embracing new, and reinterpreting old, materials, processes and perspectives, whilst challenging preconceptions of jewellery and its role in society.<sup>13</sup> The notion of challenging traditional jewellery forms and techniques has been employed by artists such as Margaret De Patta and Art Smith since the 1940s. According to den Besten, contemporary jewellery refers to jewellery that is made now and 'of our time'.<sup>14</sup> Morton stresses that the term "contemporary jewellery" is applied

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Hasan, *Traditional crafts*, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Ralph Turner, *Contemporary jewelry: A critical assessment 1945-75*, (London, Studio Vista, 1976), 8.

<sup>13</sup> Jayne Wallace, Andy Dearden, and Tom Fisher, "The significant other: the value of jewellery in the conception, design and experience of body focused digital devices." *AI & Society* 22, no. 1, 2007, 54.

<sup>14</sup> Liesbeth den Besten, *On jewellery: A compendium of international contemporary art jewellery*, (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2011), 9.

to jewellery that reflects the ideas, forms, and relationships of the world we live in today.<sup>15</sup> He believes that the artistic roots of contemporary jewellery "lie in the tradition of modern art and its character is based upon the creative observation of the art images of our times, as well as upon a mastery of techniques that can express those images in jewellery".<sup>16</sup> Contemporary jewellers might engage with ideas about what jewellery has traditionally meant and they might use that as the subject matter of their work. For example, Otto Kunzli, Swiss jewellery artist, created a jewellery piece named *Necklace* in 1986, which is about the meaning of wedding rings. He called for people to give him their used wedding rings and collected all the stories behind them.<sup>17</sup> Then, he made those 48 rings of different sizes into a chain. So, Kunzli used the significance of the wedding rings, but used that to make work that questions the meaning of jewellery. Thus, contemporary jewellers can be aware of the traditional meanings of jewellery but they will often take what jewellery has traditionally meant as a subject to talk about jewellery very self-consciously in a questioning way.

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<sup>15</sup> Philip Morton, *Contemporary jewellery: A craftsman's handbook*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc., 1970), 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Damian Skinner, "A Kunzli for our time?" *Art Jewellery Forum*, 21 May 2013, 1.



**Figure 3** *Necklace* by Swiss jewellery artist Otto Kunzli, 1986 (Skinner 2013).

The artistic concept of contemporary jewellery is, to a large extent, still considered to be new and unexplored in Saudi Arabia. Generally speaking, Saudi jewellery makers either produce traditional designs or purely modern styles. Hence, it is evident that the jewellery worn by Saudi women today falls into one of these two categories; traditional or modern. Modern jewellery is a dress adornment that is meant to satisfy women's need to beautify their appearance, particularly given the limited scope to change their publically worn clothing. Therefore, the design is sought to be compatible with the aesthetic taste in people in the modern era and what they wear.

### **Culture and the globalization of art**

Sociologists and anthropologists provide different definitions of the complex term *culture*. Williams, in his book *Key Words*, views the word culture as being one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.<sup>18</sup> One would

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<sup>18</sup>Raymond Williams, *Key words: A vocabulary of culture and society*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983), 92.

generally understand that *culture* has something to do with the traditions, customs and beliefs of a group of people. A community's culture would influence an individual's behaviour, beliefs, attitudes and values. The Saudi culture is generally conservative and traditional. Some of the customs and traditions are very old. Nevertheless, the culture of Saudi people has been affected positively by fast change, given that the country was transformed from a mostly poor Bedouin society into a rich oil producer. *Culture* is defined "as the body of information, such as knowledge, skills, attitudes, norms, or beliefs, that is acquired from other individuals via social learning, rather than acquired genetically or learned individually/asocially".<sup>19</sup> Thus, culture can be understood as the holistic way of life that is essential for the continued existence of a group of people living together in a community. Hence, culture can be the dominant values, beliefs and principles, which direct the daily actions of people within a community. Certainly, these values, beliefs and principles include traditional artistic accomplishments.

Culture is a contentious term and one with multiple interpretations. One definition helpful to this research is that of Jenks who views culture as the collective body of arts and intellectual work within any society.<sup>20</sup> In this framework, culture is positioned in the highest level of human creativeness and social life. Specifically, culture can be observed in art galleries, theatres, concert halls, and books. In the early 20th century, anthropologist Edward B. Tylor perceives culture as the full range of

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<sup>19</sup> Alex Mesoudi, "Foresight in cultural evolution." *Biology and Philosophy* 23, no. 2, 2008, 244.

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Jenks, *Culture*, (London: Routledge, 1993), 15.

learnt human behavioural patterns which are very prone to continuous change.<sup>21</sup> He also states that culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."<sup>22</sup> This approach to culture mirrored Charles Darwin's (1809-1882) theory of evolution. Moreover, Tylor's notion of cultural evolution, as a social theory, in relation to anthropology states that human cultures constantly change over time to become more complex. Chater, among other researchers, argues that cultural change is guided or steered by human actors who have the ability for prescience.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the concept of *evolution* is again acknowledged in the definition of the word "tradition". According to *Webster's Third International Dictionary*, tradition is defined as "an inherited or established way of thinking, feeling or doing: a cultural feature preserved or evolved from the past".<sup>24</sup> The concept of traditional jewellery as being a matter from history is generally compared to the fast changing fashion in the West. Based on Tylor's notion of culture, my study looks at the change in traditional jewellery as not being total. Surely, there would be elements and/or connotations that remain fixed and relate the subject to the relevant culture (i.e., in the case of my study, the art product). These fixed elements or connotations would represent the identity of that particular subject.

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<sup>21</sup> Edward B Tylor, *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, language, art, and custom*, (London, John Murray, 1920), 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Nick Chater, "Mendelian and Darwinian views of memes and cultural change", in *Perspectives on imitation*, Susan Hurley and Nick Chater eds., (Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2005), 356.

<sup>24</sup> Noah Webster, *Webster's third new international dictionary of the English language unabridged*, (Springfield, G. & C. Merriam Co, 1961), 2422.



For the purpose of my study, it is important to study cross-cultural differences and similarities. There are many good reasons for doing so, including a conservative estimate that somewhere between twenty five per cent and fifty per cent of our basic values result from culture.<sup>25</sup> The rest of our basic values are derived from universal requirements of the human condition, which includes the needs of individuals as biological organisms, requisites of coordinated social interaction, and survival and welfare needs of groups.<sup>26</sup> Gannon argues that our globalized world demands cross-cultural expertise if we are to survive in the future.<sup>27</sup> This argument is also highly supported by other researchers, such as Huntington.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the world is well on the way to becoming a "global village" as anticipated by Wyndham Lewis when he first coined the term in his book *America and Cosmic Man*.<sup>29</sup> However, globalization is complex and partial. Based on Lewis' notion, McLuhan later explains how electronic mass media managed to reduce space and time barriers in human communication, which enabled people to interact and live on a global level.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, one can possibly see that the world has become a global village in a sense through electronic mass media, social media and travel. People in different countries (i.e., different cultures) are now able to see each other, communicate,

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<sup>25</sup> Morton Gannon, *Understanding Global Cultures*, (Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications Inc, 2004), 5.

<sup>26</sup> Shalom H Schwartz, "An overview of the Schwartz theory of basic values." *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture* 2, no. 1, 2012, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Gannon, *Understanding Global Cultures*, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The clash of civilizations*, (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996), 26.

<sup>29</sup> Wyndham Lewis, *America and cosmic man*, (Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1949), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg galaxy: The making of typographic man*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1962), 34.

interact and share their views and cultures and therefore their forms of art. Art in relation to culture is viewed by Murphet in the following statement: "Art had been imperiously subsumed into culture, just as the commodity had absorbed culture itself".<sup>31</sup>

Cultural globalization, according to Crane, refers to the "transmission or diffusion across national borders of various forms of media and the arts".<sup>32</sup> Of course, one form of art in Saudi Arabia is jewellery worn by women. Goudsmit, states that the field of jewellery is opening up borders between cultures geographically and symbolically.<sup>33</sup> Alba Cappellieri, of the Politecnico di Milano in Italy, suggests that it is the internet that is most responsible for the opening up of jewellery.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Benjamin Lignel, a theorist and jewellery maker, supports the same idea. He states the following: "I would argue that nationality - unless you make it part of your work – is just one of several ingredients of who we are. The contemporary jewellery scene is extremely international, and we all now have pretty much unlimited access to information about anything, anywhere".<sup>35</sup>

Fast development in different aspects of life in Saudi Arabia occurred because of the growth of the oil industry in the kingdom since 1938. People, including Bedouins in remote areas, have been introduced to Western technologies and have

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<sup>31</sup> Julian Murphet, "Lewis and the media," In *The Cambridge companion to Wyndham Lewis*, ed. Tyrus Miller, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), 149.

<sup>32</sup> Diana Crane, "Culture and globalization," In *Global culture*, eds. Diana Crane, Nobuko Kawashima and Ken'ichi Kawasaki, (New York and London, Routledge, 2002), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Lisa Goudsmit, "Jewellery unleashed!: Crossing borders." *The Jewellery unleashed! Symposium, a Premsela symposium*. (Arnhem, 2012), 1.

<sup>34</sup> Alba Cappellieri cited in Goudsmit, "Jewellery unleashed!," 9.

<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Lignel cited in Goudsmit, "Jewellery unleashed!," 10.

benefited from the trade with the East and the West. For example, in the Hejaz region, in the west of Saudi Arabia, the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina are located. Pilgrims from all parts of the world come all year round to these two holy cities, which has exposed Saudis to other Islamic cultures. Unsurprisingly, Hejaz is the most cosmopolitan part of the country and has always been the most urban part of the Arabian Peninsula with trade based on the Red Sea port of Jeddah which was built in 646 AD.<sup>36</sup> As a result, it has been a significant source of influence on jewellery making in terms of designs and materials.<sup>37</sup> Needless to say, this affected the rest of the country positively later on.

An important later trend in traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia has been the shift towards using light-weight gold, which is not seen as traditional, as silver is considered the principle metal in traditional jewellery. However, the characteristics of the designs have not changed much. For example, the crescent shape and multiple pendants have been retained. Later on in the 1970s, eighteen carat and twenty one carat gold jewellery from Italy were imported and introduced to the Saudi markets. Not too long ago, jewellers from India, Pakistan, Syria and Lebanon (and probably from other countries) began to work in Saudi Arabia to meet the growing jewellery demand.

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<sup>36</sup> Abdul Quddus Alansari, *The history of the city of Jeddah*, (Cairo, Dar Masr Lil-Tiba'ah, 1982), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Jules Gervais-Coutellement, *Mon voyage à la Mecque in 1894*, trans. Ahmad Ibsh, (Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority, 2013), 33.

Ross states that the preference for modern gold jewellery was clearly not just a matter of aesthetic preference of gold versus silver.<sup>38</sup> Saudi women began to appreciate that those new ornaments are lighter in weight and smaller in size than the old traditional pieces of jewellery.

According to Goudsmit, Africa and Asia, including the Middle East, are not yet as developed as Europe, the United States of America and Australia in the field of jewellery design and making.<sup>39</sup> A major contributing factor is likely the relatively short history of art education in jewellery. However, art schools are not the only places of jewellery making and training. It is just a matter of time for Africa and Asia to also develop their own art jewellery culture. In fact, there are a lot of developments that are taking place these days in countries that have not had a culture of contemporary jewellery until recently, as for example, in South Korea, China and Thailand.

In addition, it is not only borders that are being crossed in the use of symbols in jewellery, "cultural aesthetics are also being adopted between cultures".<sup>40</sup> One of the reasons for such crossing over of borders between cultures is what is happening because of international students studying in other countries like myself. Goudsmit highlights the work of a Thai jewellery designer, Noon Passama, who is currently living in Holland. She is designing and making jewellery, which is considered a

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<sup>38</sup> Heather Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery: A Saudi Arabian profile*, (Studio City, California, Empire Publishing Service/ Players Press, 1998), 6.

<sup>39</sup> Goudsmit, "Jewellery unleashed!," 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

connection between different cultures, disciplines, techniques and materials. Recently, Noon Passama has established a new line of jewellery for Capara, a famous Belgian fashion brand. She used the techniques of wax casting, electroforming and oxidizing, plating, and spray painting. Passama in collaboration with well known Thai fashion designer Ek Thongprasert, who is working in Belgium, made this kind of cross over between different cultures in her new line of jewellery. It is considered originally Thai, but Belgian based. It is a collaboration based on classical jewellery silhouettes from both ethnic and Western cultures, such as the Victorian jewellery (jewellery of the Victorian era in the UK). Passama's work appears as modern or contemporary jewellery, but at the same time includes minimal elements from traditional Thai jewellery. Pulsawatdi describes Passama's work as "changing the way we look at traditional jewellery".<sup>41</sup> He asserts that Noon Passama, by redefining the 'ordinary', "creates original and fashion-forward pieces that are simple and elegant with a touch of oddity". He then concludes by stating that Noon Passama's jewellery challenges the conventional but above all changes the way we look at traditional jewellery by introducing new jewellery concepts, designs and materials.

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<sup>41</sup> Alexandre Viratham Pulsawatdi, "Noon Passama lookbook," *Alexandre Viratham Pulsawatdi Website*, 2016, 1.



**Figure 4** Necklace by Noon Passama, 2010 (Pulsawatdi 2016).



**Figure 5** Pendant by Noon Passama, 2013 (Pulsawatdi 2016).

### **Statement of problem**

This research has been prompted by my personal observations that as Saudi culture modernizes traditional jewellery is disappearing and being replaced by jewellery of Western fashion, especially by the younger generations. That is possibly because there is no perceived link between it and the present/future. It is evident that the jewellery worn by Saudi women today falls into one of two categories; traditional or modern. Jewellery is very much part of Saudi culture. However, many of the younger generations' girls and women today consider traditional jewellery old-fashioned, especially when they wear it with modern or trendy clothing in public. Saudi women's clothing has changed from traditional to Western types, even the black veil (worn by Saudi women over the clothes) has been adapted by fashion brands,

such as Yves St Laurent.<sup>42</sup> Thus, many girls and women feel that traditional jewellery in most cases does not match what they wish to wear any longer.

This practice-led study seeks to rework and redesign traditional jewellery in a way that addresses contemporary fashion and tastes while maintaining obvious links to Saudi cultural traditions. That is, providing an alternative that doesn't exist at present, where the only choice people have is traditional or 'western modern'. My study acknowledges that there are upmarket designers who reference Saudi culture through symbols and other elements, but link closely to Western style, especially when it comes to day jewellery.

### **Aims of the Study**

My study has the following aims:

1- To develop traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia and introduce a new approach to jewellery making; and

2- To provide an option for women who would like to wear unbranded contemporary jewellery that reflects their place in a globalised world that is not tied to global Western brands and provide alternative jewellery forms that are fresh, unique and distinctly Saudi Arabian.

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<sup>42</sup> Mai Yamani, "Changing the habits of a lifetime," In *Languages of dress in the Middle East*, eds. Nancy Lindisfarne-Tapper and Bruce Ingham, (London and New York, Routledge, 2013), 56.

## **The new approach in making traditional jewellery (Methodology)**

In order to achieve the goals of my practice-led PhD research, I had to adopt several methods. First, I studied and analysed Saudi traditional jewellery; and did a comprehensive review of the relevant literature to build my work on solid ground. Second, I took up the challenge of replicating two traditional jewellery pieces to understand how traditional jewellery is made. Third, I tested different design concepts and techniques to help me develop a potential vocabulary for my final jewellery.

Over the course of my research, I went through three main phases:

1- Replications of jewellery pieces toward new understanding of methods, materials and techniques in traditional jewellery making;

2- Appropriation and experimentations of Western jewellery forms on the contemporary Saudi jewellery tradition; and

3- Realisation of a concept for jewellery that I believe melds new and old as a proposition for an expanded vision for traditional Saudi jewellery.

## **Research questions**

My project will address the following research questions:

1- How can we draw from traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia to preserve and further our jewellery culture in a global world?; and



2- How can the new approach to the design and production of jewellery, proposed by this study, provide an expanded and alternative approach for Saudi women that authentically represents their identity, culture and traditions in a contemporary globalised world?

## **Conclusion**

It is well known that the breakthrough in art jewellery making in the world began in Western Europe in the sixties and there is no doubt that it is continuing these days. Kerianne Quick states that:

"Jewellery can cross borders because jewellery is so close to our humanity. Jewellery is worn intimately close to the body; adornment is inherent in our nature and intertwined in our history, and much of what is important to us has historically been expressed in jewellery. Jewellery is tied to our humanness, the sparks inside us that make us more than animals: our emotions, loyalties, beliefs, dreams, desires, and our ability to express all of these things through figurative and abstract making. There are no limits."<sup>43</sup>

My study takes a middle position with regard to globalization of the arts. It is not totally against globalization like some researchers promote, such as Smiers who argues that globalization will put culture-specific arts out of sight.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, the study is not in favour of total globalization. In my study, I argue that one can create jewellery that would relate to traditional forms in a sense. I believe it is important that the culture and the arts of a particular country not be completely erased. There are many benefits to being part of a globalized world. Globalization is going to be the fate of not only Saudi Arabia, but also the rest of the world, as no part

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<sup>43</sup> Kerianne Quick cited in Goudsmit, "Jewellery unleashed!," 15.

<sup>44</sup> Joost Smiers, *Arts under pressure: Protecting cultural diversity in the age of globalization*, (London and New York, Zed Books, 2003), 64.

of the world will be untouched by the effects of globalization. Globalization brings up many opportunities to learn from other cultures and peoples. It gives us the chance to benefit from a wider range of choices. In my opinion, until we reach the time that Saudi women will no longer wear their traditional clothes, a new approach of re-designing and re-making traditional jewellery would be sufficient for the time being.

The issue raised in my research is complicated. That is because it is a matter of two different and opposite sides among Saudi women. On one side, there are those who want to uphold the past and not follow the world, however, on the other side, there are those who want to take part in the changes globalization and contemporary culture bring. These tensions gave rise to my research topic, which aims to show through contemporary jewellery design that these two positions can find common ground. Therefore, this study emerged and suggested some kind of middle position in terms of design and making of jewellery in Saudi Arabia. The combination between traditionalism and modernism in this study is what makes it unique.

Chapter One in my exegesis will discuss the historical background and influences on traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia, and the materials and techniques used in making traditional Saudi jewellery. It is followed by Chapter Two presenting the experiments I conducted throughout my research, which helped me in conceptualizing my ideas and thoughts. Chapter Three presents and discusses the final works of my research. The final part of my exegesis is the conclusion.

# **Chapter One: Historical background & influences on traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia**

## Introduction

Traditional jewellery often draws its distinctiveness from the specific materials used. These will often help place them in a particular region, as the use of local and readily available materials underpins traditional jewellery making.<sup>45</sup> Of course, the local environment was the primary source for materials. Some materials were taken from plants and animals.

According to Al-Sannani, precious and semi precious stones were used in the Arabian Peninsula for decoration since the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>46</sup> They were mainly used as beads. The beads were made basically by piercing holes in small stones. Needless to say, the value of a particular stone relied on its type and colour. In addition, the durability of a stone was also an important factor, as jewellery was passed on from one generation to another. Peoples depended on local stones as a material at early eras. They later obtained other types of stones by trade.<sup>47</sup> Generally speaking, the stones used in traditional jewellery of a particular culture would distinguish it from other cultures. Arabian merchants since ancient times purchased ivory, pearls, and precious stones which arrived at the local ports from Africa, India, and the Far East.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Oppi Untracht, "Materials and techniques," In *Ethnic jewellery*, ed. John Mack, (London, British Museum Publications Ltd., 1988) 178.

<sup>46</sup> Rahma Al-Sannani, "Women's jewellery in ancient Arabia," *Darah Journal* 4, no. 1, 2008, 159.

<sup>47</sup> Marjorie Ransom, *Silver treasures from the land of Sheba: Regional Yemeni jewellery*, (Cairo and New York, The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 5.

<sup>48</sup> Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, "Trade between Arabia and the Empires of Rome and Asia," In *Heilbrunn timeline of art history*, (New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 1.

The use of glass in jewellery making can be traced back to 3500 BCE. It was used as an imitation of precious stones at the beginning.<sup>49</sup> Examples include Ancient Egyptians glass and then Imperial Chinese glass. Glass was manufactured with metallic oxides, which would result in colours resembling genuine cornelian, turquoise, lapis lazuli, and, in China, jade.

Metals and alloys are of great importance in the making of jewellery around the world. Gold and silver are particularly favoured, because of their value, followed by metals and alloys of less value. Metals have many qualities, including *ductility* (ability to be formed into wire); *malleability* (ability to be formed into sheet); *fusibility* (ability to be melted to make a casting); *lustre* (ability to be polished and to acquire an attractive finish); and durability. These qualities made metals suitable for making many decorative processes in jewellery making.

This chapter provides an overview of the historical background of traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula in general and in Saudi Arabia in particular. The external influences on traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia will also be explored. It provides a description of the influence of different civilizations. In this chapter, I will also present traditional jewellery designs, materials and techniques, as this is most pertinent to my research.

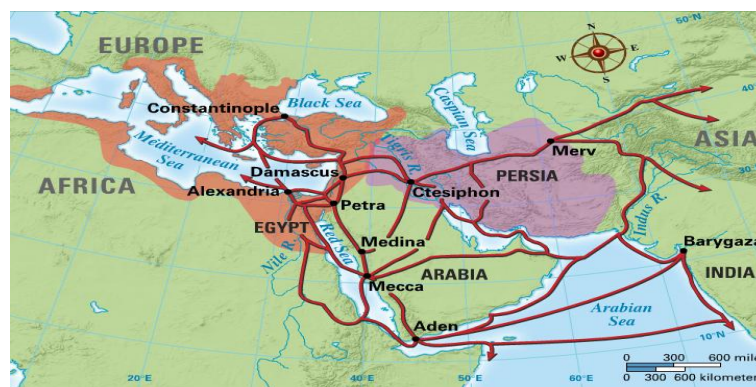
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<sup>49</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 127.

## Historical Background

### Ancient times (BCE)

The Arabian Peninsula has long been recognised as the land bridge between the East and the West. Often referred to as the ‘gateway to the East’ in western literature, the peninsula gained remarkable wealth because of its location along significant trade routes and from its trade activities.<sup>50</sup>



**Figure 6** Ancient trade routes (Ross 1998).

Traders of Arabia supplied the northern countries of the Near East, which include modern-day Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, and Palestine with gold and silver before Islam.<sup>51</sup> Ogden states that silver was rare and expensive and a possible source of silver were the galena deposits of Madyan (also known as Midian, an area in the northwest Arabian Peninsula).<sup>52</sup> Ross stresses that merchants of the Arabian Peninsula also supplied them with copper and precious stones that came from

<sup>50</sup> Andrew Crichton, *The history of Arabia: Ancient and modern*, (New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1868), 3.

<sup>51</sup> Jack Ogden, *Jewellery of the ancient world*, (London, Trefoil Books, 1982), 13.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

India, East Africa, and the Far East.<sup>53</sup> However, some of the gold and copper came from rich mines within Arabia as well. In addition, southern and western Arabia was a well known source of semi precious stones, such as garnet, agate and amber.<sup>54</sup> Ogden states that it is possible that Arabs used gold in its natural unmelted form in making jewellery, which brings to mind Strabo's mention of Arabs using gold nuggets as beads because they were ignorant of metal working.<sup>55</sup>

Approximately in 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the south west of Arabia was known as Arabia Felix, which means *contented* or *fortunate* Arabia.<sup>56</sup> The region probably gained this description as it enjoyed a peaceful and calm existence due to the comparative isolation of most of its towns. What is considered important and related to this study is that the southern and western parts of the Arabian Peninsula were a source of semi precious stones, which were used in making jewellery. The Arabian Peninsula was at the epicentre of the east-west trade route. Precious goods, from fine silks through to ivory, perfumes, spices, medicines and many other prized items passed through this region or originated there.<sup>57</sup> Amongst some of the most abundant local resources were the semi-precious stones that became part of local jewellery.

In 1972, an archaeological team led by Abdulrahman Al-Ansari carried out an excavation at Al-Fau Village, which is about 700 kilometres to the southwest of the

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<sup>53</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 12.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>55</sup> Ogden, *Jewellery of the ancient world*, 15.

<sup>56</sup> Truus Daalder, *Ethnic jewellery and adornment: Australia, Oceania, Asia and Africa*, (Adelaide, Ethnic Art Press, 2009), 323.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, "Trade between Arabia and the Empires of Rome and Asia," 1.

capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh and dates back to the fourth century BCE. Al-Ansari reported that some of the objects found in Al-Fau Village were metal, glass, bone, or ivory bracelets.<sup>58</sup> Some contained ornamentation with designs from the environment, and had lines on the exterior, or bordered by tiny circular globes repeated along their circumference. The team also found a number of silver, copper and iron rings, as well as gold earrings. A great number of beads of different sizes and shapes that were made of onyx, rock crystal (quartz), slate, dolomite, ruby and dark or transparent glass were among the discovered items. The beads were used as pendants, necklaces and as amulets. Also, ring stones, glass discs, and copper hair pins were also found during the excavation. Al-Ansari stated that one ring stone made of onyx resembles a cat's eye, and others, oval-shaped, of orange and honey coloured onyx.<sup>59</sup>



**Figure 7** Bell-shaped gold earrings, Al-Fau Village excavation (Al-Ansari 1982).



**Figure 8** Copper bracelets, Al-Fau Village excavation (Al-Ansari 1982).

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<sup>58</sup> Abdulrahman Al-Ansari, *Qaryat al-Fau: A portrait of pre-Islamic civilisation in Saudi Arabia*, (London, Valin Pollen Limited, 1982), 80.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 82.



## Post-Islamic period

The Arabian Peninsula became important in the seventh century AD with the introduction of Islam by the Prophet Mohammad (570 – 632 AD). Islam spread through the trade networks to the Middle East, Africa and parts of Southeast Asia. The contact with these other cultures introduced new designs, materials and techniques, which were later used by silversmiths in the Arabian Peninsula. For example, the filigree technique was taken from India.

At the beginning of the Umayyad period (661–750 AD), there were limited industries in the Arabian Peninsula in general, particularly in the growing regions of Najd (central part of Arabia) and Hejaz (western part of Arabia) in particular.<sup>60</sup> Without local industries, there was a high demand for imported goods. This resulted in importing industries that people needed from other regions. A major industry was metallurgy, as gold and silver were abundant. According to Al-Tabari, silversmithing and gold smithing, in the Arabian Peninsula, was learned from the Jews who used to live in the Hejaz area.<sup>61</sup> From these foundations a long tradition of craftsmanship in these fields has continued. From the Umayyad period, the number of silversmiths and goldsmiths in the region increased because of the large demand for silver and gold products. The most significant/common craft that silversmiths and goldsmiths were

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<sup>60</sup> Abdullah As-Sayf, "Industry in Najd and Hejaz in the Umayyad period," In *A history of the Arabian Peninsula*, ed. Fahd Al-Semmari, (London and New York, I.B.Tauris and Co. Ltd, 2010), 41.

<sup>61</sup> Mohammad Al-Tabari, *The history of prophets and kings*, (Cairo, Al-Maarif Publishing House, 1967), 348.

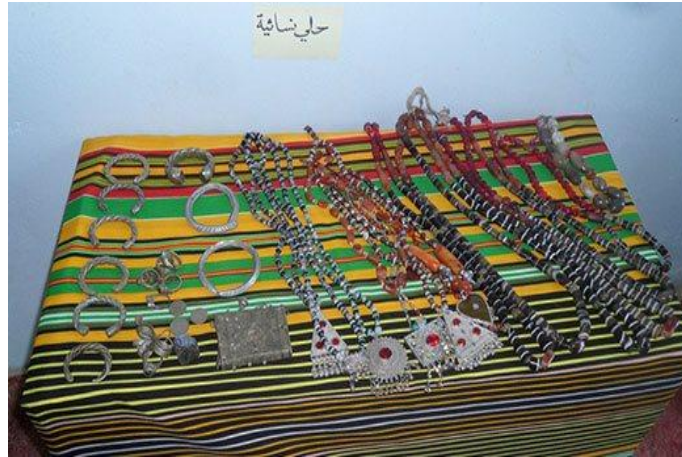
engaged in was silver and gold jewellery making. They made anklets, bracelets, rings, earrings as well as other jewellery types.<sup>62</sup>

Traditional jewellery in early stages of the Saudi state was generally made from silver and often notably displays turquoise or red stones or glass as an embellishment.<sup>63</sup> Traditional jewellery is also characterised by chains, balls, coins, and strands of irregular-sized, multi-coloured and silver beads. There are colourful stones in simple settings surrounded by fluting or bead work in high relief, snug-fitting bracelets with hinged openings and pinned fastenings, necklaces with plaited hemp ties, and intricate meshed ornaments (often sewed to cloth backings-- perhaps to protect the wearer from the sun-heated metal, as much as to preserve the ornament). Other gems and materials that were used include garnet, carnelian, amber, coral, pearl, agate, glass, faience, gold, brass, and even plastic in the form of beads.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>63</sup> Ransom, *Silver treasures from the land of Sheba*, 16.



**Figure 9** Private collection of traditional jewellery pieces (Al-Shafa Private Museum, Sabt Al-Alaya, Saudi Arabia 2016).

Traditional jewellery in its original form can hardly be found these days. Most of what remains is now in the hands of private collectors and museums. For example, the National Museum of Riyadh in Saudi Arabia contains an unidentified number of genuine pieces of traditional jewellery. Only some pieces are on display in the museum.

### **Modern Saudi Arabia**

Since 1932 AD, most of the Arabian Peninsula has been united as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, stabilized by the later discovery of oil in 1938.



**Figure 10** Map of Saudi Arabia (Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, The University of Texas at Austin 2015).

Economic developments, in Saudi Arabia, have gradually increased until it reached what is seen today, shaped by the rise of the oil industry since 1938 AD.<sup>64</sup> The economic growth in Saudi Arabia was accompanied by the introduction of Western technologies. All parts of the country were exposed to these technologies, including the nomadic Bedouins in some remote areas.<sup>65</sup>

Saudi Arabia has become one of the world's richest nations and has opened up trade opportunities with the rest of the world. This is a juggling act, as Saudi Arabia has a strong desire to maintain its history, heritage, culture and values, including ongoing support for conservative Islamic social customs, while engaging more with

<sup>64</sup> Donald Cole, "Where have the Bedouin gone?," *Anthropological Quarterly* 76, no. 2, 2003, 236.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Azzi, "Saudi Arabia: The kingdom and its power," *National Geographic* 158, no. 3, 1980, 288.

the Western world.<sup>66</sup> A number of museums have been opened in the last four decades, not to mention cultural festivals and exhibitions inside and outside the country. For example, the Jenadriyah Heritage and Cultural Festival held annually in Jenadriyah village near the capital, Riyadh since 1985. The Jenadriyah is the biggest cultural event of Saudi Arabia. It exhibits the culture, architecture, foods, folklore dances, traditional dresses and craftsmanship such as jewellery, pottery, weaving, woodwork, metalwork, and leatherwork of the country.



**Figure 11** Traditional jewellery making (Jenadriyah Heritage and Cultural Festival, Saudi Arabia 2014).

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<sup>66</sup> Fouad Al-Farsy, *Modernity and tradition: The Saudi equation*, (Guernsey, Knight Communications Ltd, 2000), 13.

In Saudi Arabia, there are 23 government operated museums. In addition, there are more than 100 private museums and exhibition halls all around the country, though some are small<sup>67</sup>. The most significant of these museums is the Saudi Arabian National Museum located in Riyadh, the capital of the country. It was the first public museum and was officially opened in 1979. The reason behind the establishment of this museum was basically to protect the cultural heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The National Museum includes traditional jewellery along with weaponry and artefacts made of wood and stone. These examples, together with many others, show that Saudi Arabia is aware of the importance of preserving all features of ethnic and historical values.

The understanding of the importance and appreciation of traditional jewellery is part and parcel of the whole image of the history and heritage of Saudi Arabia. In 1972, a Royal Decree was issued to form the Saudi Arabian Arts Society<sup>68</sup>. The name of the society was later changed into the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts. The Society was established for the purpose of preserving, protecting and promoting culture and the arts of Saudi Arabia.

Yet, while this is a welcome initiative and clear support for Saudi Arabia's tradition past, it is almost too late. Silversmiths in Saudi Arabia still make traditional jewellery, however, much less than the past. Many of them are retiring or already dead and the younger generation has started to opt for professions that are more

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<sup>67</sup> Al-Hasan, *Traditional crafts*, 75.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Farsy, *Modernity and tradition*, 24.

profitable.<sup>69</sup> The generational commitment to family trades has all but disappeared as more lucrative opportunities and better education is available. At the same time, many Saudi Arabian women have recently begun to favour modern Western style jewellery mostly made from gold, wanting to connect with the trends of the global fashion market. Traditional jewellery is simply seen by many younger women as ‘old fashioned’. Since the late 1970s, Western boutiques started to open in Saudi Arabia. Azzi mentions that by 1980 Yves Saint Laurent had already opened a boutique in Jeddah, and Christian Dior opened a boutique in Riyadh.<sup>70</sup>

Traditional jewellery in its original forms is still worn today by many women, though silver is increasingly being replaced by mass produced gold jewellery items that can be purchased from local jewellery shops. Hence, jewellery in Saudi Arabia today presents a fascinating combination of traditional styles and modern jewellery either imported from foreign countries or made in Saudi Arabia. Traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia includes finger rings, toe rings, nose rings, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, armlets, anklets, head ornaments, and belts (waist bands), in addition to other jewellery types.

Most of the jewellery items are now made of gold instead of silver. Gold is a statement of wealth and modernity, while silver jewellery has association with a nomadic tribal past, not necessarily something that urban dwellers want to be associated with. The jewellery designs include more varieties. Furthermore, some traditional jewellery items are custom made slightly smaller than older forms. The

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<sup>69</sup> Bob Chester, “Bedouin jewellery: A dying tradition,” *Roving Insight Magazine* 1, no. 1 1999, 3.

<sup>70</sup> Azzi, “Saudi Arabia,” 289.

modified jewellery is traditionally worn at weddings and other special occasions, social or religious. It is usually made by foreign artisans working in Saudi Arabia. DSouza asserts that Saudi Arabia was one of the top 10 countries in the world with the highest gold jewellery consumption in 2015. It was ranked number 4 in world coming after India, China and the United States.<sup>71</sup>

If we look at the state of the Saudi jewellery market at the present time, one can see that the majority of jewellery shops (or gold shops, as described by local people, because most of the jewellery items are now made of yellow gold) display slightly modified versions of traditional jewellery (or if I may call it neo-traditional jewellery), as many of the items remain bulky and heavy. Most jewellery items in the market today are made of 20, 22 or 24 karat gold. The main difference between traditional jewellery and what is mostly available now in the market is that the latter is generally made of pure gold, while the former is mainly made of silver. Evidently, these gold shops are considered the mainstream jewellery retailers. The reason behind this is that most Saudi women, foreigners who live in Saudi Arabia and tourists appreciate the traditional styles. Also, they understand that purchasing gold jewellery items is a great saving method. They can sell their gold jewellery at any time if they are in need of money, as the second-hand jewellery market is dynamic in Saudi Arabia, but only for gold jewellery items. Similarly, men prefer to purchase gold jewellery whether as part of the marriage dowry or simply as gifts for their female

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<sup>71</sup> Deborah DSouza, "Top 10 countries with the highest demand for gold jewellery," *Investopedia*., 2016, 1.



family members. Foreign residents and tourists also tend to purchase souvenir gold jewellery items, especially those exhibiting holy sites or Quranic verses.



**Figure 12** Samples of gold jewellery items (necklaces and waist bands) from the Saudi market (Photo taken December 2014).



**Figure 13** A bangle (granulation technique) from the Saudi market (Photo taken December 2016).



**Figure 14** A bangle (repoussé technique) from the Saudi market (Photo taken December 2016).

On the other hand, there are Saudi jewellery companies that design and make Western style jewellery or at least jewellery that differs greatly from the modified version of traditional jewellery dominating the market. Many of these companies have developed to become brand names in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East. Some companies, such as Mouawad Jewellery, even have branches in Western countries now. According to Radhi, the most popular jewellery brand names in Saudi Arabia today include the following marques: L'azurde, Damas, Al-Fardan, Gold Craft, Barakat, Taiba, Mouawad, Al-Haramain, Jahan, Ghassan, and Fitaihi.<sup>72</sup> All of these companies, except for Gold Craft, produce Western style jewellery items.

A few jewellery companies in Saudi Arabia preserve the spirit of traditional jewellery, with additions of new designs and reduction in size and weight. For example, the Gold Craft Jewellery incorporates the traditional touch in some of their

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<sup>72</sup> Nadia Radhi, "The most popular jewellery brands in Saudi Arabia," *Almrsal Magazine*, 2014, 1.

items and includes Arabic calligraphy in most of their designs. The designs below clearly exhibit Arabic calligraphy with a traditional taste.<sup>73</sup>



**Figure 15** Desert Treasure, a pendant necklace by Gold Craft Jewellery (Gold Craft Jewellery 2015).



**Figure 16** Desert Rose, a jewellery set by Gold Craft Jewellery (Gold Craft Jewellery 2015).



**Figure 17** The Tribe, a bangle by Gold Craft Jewellery (Gold Craft Jewellery 2015).

On the other hand, there are other companies that prefer Western style jewellery. Examples of these companies include Fitaihi Jewellery and Mouawad Jewellery. They are both famous brands in the field of fine jewellery and offer wide collections of fine jewellery pieces made from gold (yellow and white), diamonds, and other precious stones. The Mouawad brand later established a presence in Europe, Asia and North America. It is worth mentioning that the designers of most of these Western style jewellery brands are foreigners, as there are no educational institutes in Saudi Arabia that teach jewellery design and making- though there is a great demand for jewellery in Saudi Arabia. Below are examples of Fitaihi (Figures 18 and 19) and Mouawad (Figures 20 and 21) jewellery items.

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<sup>73</sup> *Gold Craft Jewellery Website*, 2015.



**Figure 18** Jewellery set (white gold, diamonds and sapphire) by Fitaihi Jewellery, 2016.



**Figure 19** Diamond floral brooch by Fitaihi Jewellery, 2016.



**Figure 20** *Liana*, a diamond jewellery set by Mouawad Jewellery, 2016.



**Figure 21** *Twilight Garden*, a diamond and emerald jewellery set by Mouawad Jewellery, 2016.

As for non-commercial jewellery, there are a few jewellery design artists in Saudi Arabia, as the whole concept of art jewellery is new to most Saudis. When I finished my master's degree in jewellery design and making from the University of Sydney in 2006, I got back to Saudi Arabia having in mind the prospect of introducing new designs to Saudi art jewellery. I spent about a year conceptualizing my ideas. Then, in 2007, I was appointed as a lecturer at the Arts Education

department, Umm Al-Qura University, where I had the opportunity to explore my new views. I was assigned to teach Metal work & jewellery (I) and Metal work & jewellery (II), two subjects in the bachelor of art education programme. In those two subjects, I was able to discuss with my colleagues and students my new vision and perceive their thoughts. Later, in 2008, I managed to present my jewellery work in a special "Jewellery art exhibition" at Umm Al-Qura University, where some space was given to my students to display their work as well. This was the first jewellery art exhibition at the university. Figures 22 and 23 illustrate some of the works presented in the exhibition.



**Figure 22** Illustration of some of my work (Jewellery art exhibition, Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia 2008).





**Figure 23** Samples of my students' work (Jewellery art exhibition, Umm Al-Qura University, Saudi Arabia 2008).

In 2014, Saudi artist, Lillian Ismail, commenced her study in jewellery design and making. At age 18, Lillian Ismail was named the youngest Saudi jewellery designer. She sees her designs as presenting the Saudi culture through traditional jewellery pieces designed in a modern way.<sup>74</sup> Ismail's work is generally made from yellow and white gold. For example, she created traditional bangles in a different way, as her bangles are smaller and lighter than traditional ones. Several bangles are presented attached together in a modern style unlike traditional bangles that are separate. Another example of Ismail's jewellery is that she presented the traditional collar in a different style using white gold instead of fabric that was used in traditional jewellery. It is really remarkable that an artist from the younger generations is interested in traditional jewellery. I believe Ismail was successful in re-introducing

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<sup>74</sup> Lama Alem, "Lillian Ismail – A gem among Saudi designers," *Destination Magazine*, 2015, 1.

some traditional jewellery types in a more modern way, which is to some extent similar to what I am doing. The difference is that my work is part of a research degree and is based on thorough investigation and analysis of Saudi traditional jewellery.



**Figure 24** Bangle by Lillian Ismail, 2015 (Alem 2015).



**Figure 25** Collar by Lillian Ismail, 2015 (Alem 2015).

Another jewellery artist in Saudi Arabia is Mashael Alwohayb. Her approach in jewellery design is based on incorporating Arabic calligraphy in all of her designs using silver metal only. Alwohayb identifies her designs as small portraits presenting the aesthetics of Arabic calligraphy. Thus, she uses the Arabic word *Raqsh*, which means portrait, to describe her jewellery work. Alwohayb posts her jewellery on Instagram.<sup>75</sup> In my view, Alwohayb's work presents a good initiative for a jewellery artist. I believe she would be able to introduce more sophisticated designs in the future that show the beauty of Arabic calligraphy, as it is a rich area to explore.

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<sup>75</sup> Mashael Alwohayb, *Raqsh Website*, 2015, 1.



**Figure 26** Pendant necklace incorporating Arabic calligraphy by Mashael Alwohayb, 2015 (Alwohayb 2015).



**Figure 27** Bracelet incorporating Arabic calligraphy by Mashael Alwohayb, 2015 (Alwohayb 2015).

Rawan Alsehli is also another jewellery artist who owns a private gallery in Medina, which she established under the name Muse Rawan Jewellery in 2016. The inspiration in her jewellery works is based on Islamic architecture. Alsehli's jewellery is made from 18-24 karat gold, silver, pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones.<sup>76</sup> Alsehli's jewellery presents only some Islamic architectural aspects and her designs are simple and mostly include geometrical shapes. It is evident that Alsehli's jewellery has been greatly influenced Islamic art. Also, the jewellery making techniques in her works are basic. I believe Islamic architecture is full of exquisite designs and decorations that could be greatly incorporated in jewellery making. I was influenced by Alsehli's jewellery since she made her jewellery pieces smaller and lighter than traditional ones.

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<sup>76</sup> Rawan Alsehli, *Muse Rawan Jewellery*. 2016, 1.





**Figure 28** Islamic star gold earring by Rowan Alsehli, 2016 (Alsehli 2016).



**Figure 29** Islamic art gold bangle by Rowan Alsehli, 2016 (Alsehli 2016).

To sum up, I can say that the jewellery market in Saudi Arabia is mainly dominated by gold jewellery shops. That is because locals, expatriates and tourists (mostly from Islamic countries) highly appreciate the monetary value of the jewellery material (i.e., gold) being a savings method in addition to its wearability function. On the other hand, brand jewellery in Saudi Arabia, whether local or international, generally attracts women from the upper-middle to upper classes, as they can afford it. Further, Yamani asserts that the elite women of Saudi Arabia prefer Western designer jewellery, such as Cartier and Bulgari.<sup>77</sup> The elite wear designer jewellery to distinguish themselves from other elites and from the nouveaux riches. The designs and types of jewellery in the various gold jewellery shops are not very much different, as individual shops do not have specific themes for different seasons or social and religious occasions except for the neo-traditional subject matter. In contrast, each brand jewellery shop usually has its specific theme/s that might sometimes change from one season to another as well as special collections for particular settings. The

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<sup>77</sup> Yamani, "Changing the habits of a lifetime," 56.

jewellery market in Saudi Arabia is rather different from chain store jewellers in Australia, where Australian jewellery shops seem to offer somewhat similar jewellery items. With regard to non-commercial jewellery in Saudi Arabia, artists exhibit their works in private galleries or on social media. Jewellery galleries are usually attended only by those who appreciate unique handmade artistic work.

### **Influences on Traditional Jewellery in Saudi Arabia**

Traditional jewellery made from silver is very exciting because of the techniques and processes used in making it, and the styles that resemble ancient civilizations now lost. Tait affirms that, during the first few centuries of Islam, silversmiths and goldsmiths continued to follow Roman, Byzantine and Sassanian traditions in terms of form, technique and decoration.<sup>78</sup> In addition, the Islamic world inherited the jewellery techniques and designs of Graeco-Roman Syria and Egypt and of Sassanian Persia, with the earliest examples from Fatimid Egypt and Seljuk Persia, and the decorative designs progressed with the support of the Seljuk Turks.<sup>79</sup> Thus, Islamic jewellery was very much indistinguishable from that of ancient cultures and civilizations. Islamic jewellery first started to be identified as Islamic in the eleventh century after the rising popularity of Arabic calligraphy ornamentation.

As mentioned earlier, traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula was subject to several external influences throughout the ages. Among those influences

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<sup>78</sup> Hugh Tait, *Seven thousand years of jewellery*, (London, The British Museum Publications, 1986), 76.

<sup>79</sup> British Museum, *Jewellery through 7000 years*, (London, British Museum Publications, 1976), 65.

were the following civilizations: Egyptian, Sumerian, Persian, Phoenician, Greek, Roman, African, Byzantine, and Asian. I will only discuss the influences that are strongly related to my study.

According to Tait, one of the earliest civilizations that influenced traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula was the Egyptian civilization (3100–332 BCE).<sup>80</sup> Ancient Egyptians preferred multiple pendant ornaments as well as plain or engraved metal surfaces decorated with granulation and filigree. Furthermore, the Egyptians used turquoise, carnelian, faience, glass, colourful beads, and multi-coloured combinations of stones set on thin sheets of forged (hammered) gold. Interestingly, all of these features exist in traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia. For example, it is evident that Bedouins of the Arabian Peninsula shared the Egyptians' passion for turquoise. Merchants in Arabia imported turquoise from Sinai in the past. Another example of Egyptian influence on traditional jewellery is the resemblance between some traditional ornaments and the Egyptian rings and ear-rings made after the New Kingdom era.<sup>81</sup> Interestingly, after Islam was introduced in Egypt in 640 AD, silver was introduced to Egypt from the Arabian Peninsula and later became the most dominant metal.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Tait, *Seven thousand years of jewellery*, 77.

<sup>81</sup> Heather Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, (London, Stacey International, 1978), 48.

<sup>82</sup> Jolanda Bos and Sigrid van Roode, "An ornamental heritage: Ethnic Egyptian silver jewellery," *Ornament* 30, no. 1, 2006, 63.



**Figure 30** Ancient Egyptian pearl and turquoise earrings (Dhinesh 2015).

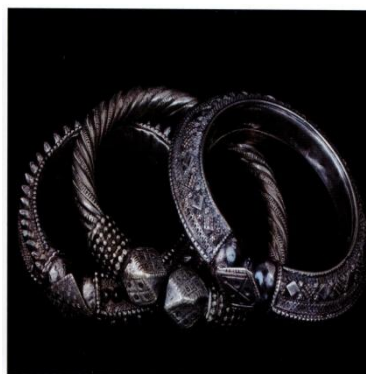


**Figure 31** Saudi traditional pearl and turquoise earrings (Ross 1998).

The Persian influence is probably the strongest of the outside influences on traditional jewellery in Arabia, especially in the north, south and east of the Peninsula. That is because the Persians blended with the Bedouin Arabs in those regions before Islam. The Persian influence on traditional jewellery may be apparent in the use of multi pendant necklaces and long pendant beads with bells and the use of filigree and granulation in bracelets and other jewellery types.



**Figure 32** Gold Persian bangle, 11<sup>th</sup> century AD (The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York 2014).



**Figure 33** Traditional Arabian bangles (Ransom 2014).

Greek goldsmiths, between 850 and 750 BCE, used decorative techniques, mainly granulation, to adorn the plain metal surfaces.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, according to Higgins, the Greek also employed other techniques, such as filigree.<sup>84</sup> The techniques of granulation and filigree are evident in traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula. These cultures and regions show some shared characteristics so there may have been cross cultural interactions. Another form of influence of the Greeks on Arabian jewellery was the use of the mace shaped terminal beads used in Arabian jewellery, which looked identical in shape to Greek beads of the fourth century BC.<sup>85</sup> The beads are worn in a similar arrangement as the early Greek model.

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<sup>83</sup> John Boardman, *Greek art*, (London, Thames and Hudson, 1964), 84.

<sup>84</sup> Reynold Higgins, *Greek and Roman jewellery*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1980), 67.

<sup>85</sup> Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, 54.



**Figure 34** Greek club-shaped gold beads decorated with filigree, 4<sup>th</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE (The British Museum 2014).



**Figure 35** A variety of Arabian traditional jewellery beads decorated with filigree and granulation (Ross 1998).

A prominent technique of the Romans that influenced traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula was wire making, according to Ross.<sup>86</sup> In addition, the Roman style of large size finger rings appears in traditional jewellery of Arabia. Again, engagement and wedding rings were first introduced by the Romans.<sup>87</sup> They remained a symbol of matrimony ever since. Such rings are included in traditional jewellery, which is presented to the bride as dowry upon marriage. Today, Arabian Bedouins follow similar traditions of the engagement and wedding rings initiated by the ancient Romans. Another form of influence of the Romans on traditional jewellery in Arabia is the snake shape, which is also evident in other civilizations such as the ancient Egyptian, Greek and African. The Bedouin snake shaped coils, which continue to appear today as bracelets, were the result of the influence of Roman jewellery.

<sup>86</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 20-21.

<sup>87</sup> Renate Rosenthal, *Jewellery in ancient times*. (London, Cassell, 1973), 57.



**Figure 36** Roman gold twisted bracelet, 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD (The British Museum 2014).



**Figure 37** Traditional Saudi silver twisted bracelet (Ross 1978).

The jewellery making styles and techniques of the Byzantine Empire were born into the Golden Age of Islam and had influence on jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula. For example, there is evidence of Arabian earrings of definite Byzantine derivation. It exhibits the pennanular wire loop style with a connected filigree cage and the crescent shaped design. Another example that indicates the influence of Byzantine jewellery on traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula is the use of wires, chains and clasps. Various traditional Arabian ornaments contain different types of attachments with spacers and pendant baubles using a number of techniques.<sup>88</sup> Also, there is noticeable resemblance between traditional Arabian bracelets and Byzantine bracelets decorated with granulation.

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<sup>88</sup> Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, 57.



**Figure 38** Byzantine gold bangle decorated with granulation, 600 AD (circa) (The British Museum 2014).



**Figure 39** Saudi traditional bangles (Bahashwan 2014).

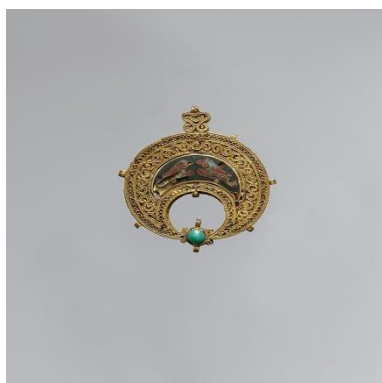
After Islam rose as a religion, there have been a number of influences on jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>89</sup> For example, the crescent shape (*hilal* in Arabic), which is a symbol of Islamic lunar calendar, became a popular attractive jewellery shape, though the crescent moon shape also appears much earlier in India and forms part of Buddhist iconography. Also, the crescent shape was since ancient times considered a prophylactic sign against the Evil Eye, especially with the Byzantines.<sup>90</sup> The crescent shape was later adopted by the Ottomans as a symbol of Islam and jewellers throughout the Islamic world used it in their ornaments. Another example indicating the influence of the Islamic faith on Arabian jewellery is the inclusion of the religious amulets (*tameemah* in Arabic). They usually took the form of pendants with the name of Allah (God) inscribed on them. Another form of religious amulets includes ones made as charm cases containing verses from the Quran. Also, a small hand identified as *khamisa* (the Arabic word for number five),

<sup>89</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 22.

<sup>90</sup> Rosenthal, *Jewellery in ancient times*, 57.



which is considered a form of protection from envy and evil eyes, is also used in traditional jewellery in Arabia. Arabesque, which is the prominent Islamic decoration form, also influenced traditional jewellery. It consists of surface decorations based on geometric forms that display the forms of plants, and shapes. It also includes Arabic calligraphy.



**Figure 40** Islamic crescent-shaped pendant, 11<sup>th</sup> century AD (The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York 2014).



**Figure 41** Islamic crescent-shaped pendant necklace (Bahashwan 2014).

There is a significant similarity between traditional jewellery in the Arabian Peninsula and tribal jewellery in India. This resemblance, which lies in the ornaments, was because of the connection and contact between the two cultures. For example, glass bangles in traditional Indian jewellery were evident in traditional jewellery in the northern and eastern parts of Arabia. In addition, there are some similarities between Indian and traditional Arabian bangles, especially in using filigree and granulation decorations. Also, some Indian jewellery pieces incorporate coins, as is the case with Saudi traditional jewellery. Similarly, Arabs later influenced Indian jewellery design and making. The Indians took from the Arabs the fish, crescent and

star shapes.<sup>91</sup> In addition, in Indian jewellery, some ornaments and precious and semi-precious stones carried engraved holy words and verses from the Quran.



**Figure 42** Indian necklace with coin pendants (Styling With Coin Jewellery 2014).



**Figure 43** Saudi traditional necklace with coin pendants (Bahashwan 2014).

### **Traditional jewellery materials**

Traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia employs many materials. The materials include silver, gold, brass, coral, agate, turquoise, coins, garnets, carnelian, amber, pearls, glass, faience, and beads. A more detailed explanation of the materials used in the making of traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia will be discussed below. I will only focus on the materials I used in my experiments and final works of my study.

### **Silver**

As discussed earlier, traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia is generally made from silver, in addition to other materials. Unlike gold, silver is by and large not found in its pure state. Therefore, it must be separated from the other constituents of

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<sup>91</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 18.

the ore.<sup>92</sup> The natural alloy of the precious metals, silver and gold, known as electrum, was thought by the ancient Greeks to be another metal, and silver as a separate element was discovered accidentally as a by-product of the gold-refining process.<sup>93</sup>

The most common question concerning traditional jewellery is whether the silver is 'real' or not. Some traditional jewellery did not contain silver.<sup>94</sup> While silver is the most common base metal used in traditional jewellery, sometimes it does not appear at all and it is rarely found in pure form. Alloys of silver and copper were most common, providing a more durable base product. They were sometimes made of an alloy. As silver is soft, the craftsmen would add a base metal to make the object durable. They usually used copper, which gave the best shine.

Ancient and medieval metallurgists apparently did not realize that many silver sources contain as much as one per cent gold as an impurity, and therefore did not attempt to remove this precious constituent.<sup>95</sup> This is fortunate, since the level of impurities in old silver coins can provide us with valuable historical information. Each ancient silver source had its own characteristic level of gold impurity and this level was unaltered by the crude silver refining processes used by the metallurgists. For example, two silver coins may appear the same but the analysis of their metal content will give an indication of their origin of the mother lode. This basic method

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<sup>92</sup> As-Sayf, "Industry in Najd and Hejaz in the Umayyad period," 41.

<sup>93</sup> Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, 89-90.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>95</sup> As-Sayf, "Industry in Najd and Hejaz in the Umayyad period," 42.

could be applied to the oldest examples of Arabian traditional jewellery and perhaps allow us to determine the actual source of silver used for these ornaments.<sup>96</sup>



**Figure 44** Saudi Arabian silver finger ring, 20<sup>th</sup> Century AD (The British Museum 2014).

## Gold

Although traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia is predominately made of silver, it sometimes includes some gold ornaments. Gold is the metal worker's ideal medium for it is the most malleable, ductile and durable of materials. A goldsmith may draw it into wire as fine as a hair or beat it into a leaf so thin that light will shine through it. It may be cast with a finger print or smelted into minute spheres known as 'shot'. Pure gold is remarkably stable and impervious to the ordinary processes of corrosion and decay. A gold coin can lie buried for more than a thousand years and yet be found as if almost newly minted.

Appreciated for its beauty and rareness by the ancients, it is on account of its inherent stability that it is possible to study the jewellery making techniques evolved

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<sup>96</sup> Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, 90.

by past civilisations. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case with traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia, as pieces made purely from gold are scarce.<sup>97</sup>



**Figure 45** Traditional Arabian String of gold beads with granulated decoration, 18 century (The British Museum 2014).

## **Brass**

In addition to silver and gold, traditional jewellers in Saudi Arabia also used brass in making some of their ornaments. Brass, as a yellow metal alloy made of copper and zinc, was used as a substitute for gold. The making of brass jewellery was to accommodate the needs of poorer Bedouins, as it is cheaper in price. Traditional oval forehead ornaments, displaying set turquoise with garnets and pendant pearls, were occasionally made from brass as well as other jewellery types.

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<sup>97</sup> As-Sayf, "Industry in Najd and Hejaz in the Umayyad period," 43.



**Figure 46** Arabian traditional finger-ring made of brass, 20<sup>th</sup> century AD (The British Museum 2014).

### **Agate**

Agate is another popular mineral used as a gemstone which appears in strung bead form in traditional Jewellery. The name 'agate' is derived from the Greek Achates, originally referring to a small rivulet in Sicily where it was extracted by ancient Greeks and Romans. Agate is also known in Arabic as *aqiq*, which is the generic term for semi precious stone.

Distinguished by irregular bands of colour, agate is no exception as a subject for the counterfeiter. However, imitation appears only occasionally in traditional jewellery since genuine agate is readily available from many sources, especially Yemen and India.



**Figure 47** Agate Saudi traditional necklace (Ross 1978).

## **Turquoise**

The name ‘turquoise’ is originated from the fact that the Persian stones from Khorasan were exported through Turkey. The ancient names for turquoise were ‘callais’ and ‘callaite’. Tales have been attached to the gemstones through the ages and turquoise is no exception. It is said that it will glow when the wearer is content but when the wearer is upset the sheen disappears.<sup>98</sup> In the past, turquoise was imported from Sinai. The finest turquoise today comes from the Nishapur, a district in Iran. Turquoise is often used in traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, 94.

<sup>99</sup> Wahbi Al-Hariri-Rifai and Mokhless Al-Hariri-Rifai, *The Heritage of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, (Washington, D.C., The Georgetown Design Group Publications, 1990), 55.



**Figure 48** Saudi Arabian silver and turquoise thumb ring (ornamental), 20<sup>th</sup> century AD (The British Museum 2014).

## Beads

Beads have been used and worn mainly for decoration throughout the history of mankind. Bead materials developed from one era to another. There is evidence that even the poorest Egyptians of the Middle Kingdom (2040 - 1730 BCE) and the New Kingdom (1500 – 900 BCE) owned some kind of bead necklace. Colourful beads were used either strung to a thread or as pendants in traditional jewellery, in a similar way to ancient Egypt.<sup>100</sup> There is evidence of ancient carnelian bead making at historic *Tayma*, which is an important northern Arabian oasis town. *Tayma* was at the centre of an ancient trading network.<sup>101</sup>

Traditional necklaces consist of a combination of beads varying in material, shape, colour and size. In Arabia, beads were made from many different materials, including brass, silver, gold, jade, amber, coral, carnelian, feldspar, lapis lazuli,

<sup>100</sup> Ali Al-Mughannum and John Warwick, "Excavations of the Dhahran Burial Mounds," *Atlat: The Journal of Saudi Arabian Archaeology* 10, no. 1, 1986, 11.

<sup>101</sup> Ricardo Eichmann, Hanspeter Schaudig, and Arnulf Ha, "Archaeology and epigraphy at Tayma (Saudi Arabia)," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 17, no. 2, 2006, 163.



bronze, ceramic, glass and faience. They were discovered in archaeological sites in the Eastern Province of Arabia.<sup>102</sup>

Silver alloy beads could sometimes be as large as two inches in diameter. Large silver beads were formed in two halves by using the embossing technique and then embellished and soldered together.



**Figure 49** Saudi gold beads, fabricated from sheet, wire, and swaged wire; decorated with granulation; set with turquoise, 19<sup>th</sup> –early 20<sup>th</sup> century AD (The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York 2014).

## Coins

In the Arabian Peninsula, the most common coin (*umla*) used in traditional jewellery was the Maria Theresa thaler, which is often highly decorated with beads and bells. These large silver coins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire all bear the mint date of 1780. Until recently, Maria Theresa thaler coins were official tender in Yemen and used as a currency in surrounding regions.

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<sup>102</sup> Ross, *Bedouin in Saudi Arabia*, 110.



**Figure 50** The Maria Theresa thaler silver coin, 1780 (My private coin collection).

The Indian Rupee, the Maria Theresa thaler and the Turkish silver majeedi were the most commonly found in traditional jewellery.<sup>103</sup> Before the use of coins as currency in the Arabian Peninsula, Bedouins used to gather in the large oases and trading centres bringing their livestock, wool, butter, cheese to exchange for dates, grain, cloth and clothing items, mats, horseshoes, arms, gunpowder, bullets, medicines, coffee and tobacco.<sup>104</sup>

In 1928, Saudi Arabia established its own bimetallic independent monetary system based on the silver riyal using the British gold sovereign as its standard base, the value of which was one sovereign to ten riyals. As Saudi coins became widely used, this encouraged traditional silversmiths to use them in more designs. Thus, coins were favoured by women and commonly incorporated into traditional jewellery.

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<sup>103</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 68.

<sup>104</sup> Alexei Vassiliev, *The history of Saudi Arabia*, (London: Saqi, 1998), 43.



**Figure 51** Saudi Arabian silver riyal coin, 1935 (My private coin collection).

An array of metal coins were used as elements of traditional jewellery and perhaps the most interesting is the British trade dollar, which is a silver coin issued between 1895-1935 in order to promote British commerce in the East.<sup>105</sup> This type of coins had been favoured and requested for many years by merchants and bankers. Silver coins used in traditional jewellery were mostly dealt with according to the market price of the material. Thus, the monetary value would depend on the weight of silver.

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<sup>105</sup> Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, 113.



**Figure 52** Saudi Arabian traditional necklace with silver Saudi riyal coin pendants, 1947-1962 (The British Museum 2014).

### **Traditional silversmiths (the artisans)**

The artisans here are the traditional silversmiths. They are usually born into the artisan class and their craft is generally passed on through the generations from fathers to sons. Their fathers teach them the traditional techniques and encourage them to produce the styles favoured in their area. Silversmiths in the Arabian Peninsula are settled generally in oases or coastal towns.<sup>106</sup> In the past, they occasionally became mobile because of their association with a large nomadic tribe, and their skills were required for indefinite periods of time.

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<sup>106</sup> Vassiliev, *The history of Saudi Arabia*, 43.



**Figure 53** Aziz Bahashwan, Saudi traditional silversmith (Al-Baidhani 2014).

Aziz Bahashwan is an example of a Saudi traditional jewellery silversmith. He has been working in this occupation for more than twenty four years in the city of Abha, south of Saudi Arabia. He participates and exhibits his silver work in almost every major cultural event in Saudi Arabia, including the eminent annual Jenadriyah Heritage and Cultural Festival held in Riyadh. In an interview with Mohammad Al-Baidhani (journalist), Bahashwan stated that he learned the profession of silversmithing from his father who owned the oldest silversmithing shop in Abha, Abu Aqeel Silversmithing.<sup>107</sup> He said he loved silversmithing ever since he was a child and considers it a significant component of the Saudi Arabian heritage. He used to watch his father for hours until he started to work with him when he became a young man. Bahashwan expressed his concern regarding the profession. He mentioned that there are not many traditional silversmiths left in Saudi Arabia, as many have already died and the younger generations prefer other more profitable

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<sup>107</sup> Mohammad Al-Baidhani, "Bahashwan: twenty four years in silversmithing," *Al-Madina Newspaper*, no. 18686, 21 June 2014, 16.

professions. Bahashwan does not have a website, but has posted many of his works on social media, namely Twitter and Instagram.

Another example of a Saudi traditional silversmith is Abdullateef Al-Mehanna, an 80 year-old who owns a workshop in Suwaiq Market in Al-Hafuf city of the eastern province. He is a skilled professional who has been working in this occupation for more than sixty years. Abdulaziz Al-Eisa interviewed Al-Mehanna in his workshop and learned that this craft was passed on to him by his father.<sup>108</sup> Al-Mehanna specializes in precious stone traditional jewellery. He buys imported stones from Yemen, Iran, India, as well as other countries and incorporates them in his jewellery designs. Many customers, according to Al-Mehanna, prefer precious stone jewellery as opposed to mere silver or gold jewellery. Interestingly, Al-Mehanna's son works with him along with a couple of co-workers. This gives me hope that there is someone who will continue to make traditional jewellery for more than one generation.

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<sup>108</sup> Abdulaziz Al-Eisa, "Al-Mehanna: A jeweller for more than sixty years." *Al-Ahsa Online Journal*, July 2012.



**Figure 54** Abdullateef Al-Mehanna, Saudi traditional gold and silversmith (Al-Eisa 2012).

It is a pity that such great heritage has started to vanish already, as many silversmiths have left the craft and chosen other advantageous professions. It is hoped, by shedding the light on works of great artisans, that more people would appreciate the beauty of traditional arts in general and traditional jewellery in specific.

### **Traditional jewellery making techniques**

Traditional Saudi jewellery is handmade with basic tools. Machines were not used in the making processes. The basic techniques for making traditional jewellery have not changed much since ancient times. Annealing and hammering are the two basic processes in making traditional jewellery, followed by cutting in preparation for embossing, repoussé, chasing, engraving, fusing, soldering and casting.<sup>109</sup> The techniques of filigree and granulation are also greatly used. Wires are also produced for making chains and for use in the filigree technique. These techniques may be

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<sup>109</sup> Ross, *Bedouin jewellery in Saudi Arabia*, 62.

employed to whatever metal content is used. Also, they were probably preferred because they are fairly portable and require minimal equipment.

Embossing and repoussé are decorative processes and techniques where the shape or design is hammered out from the back of a thin piece of metal. Chasing resembles embossing and repoussé. However, it is performed on the other side of the metal. So, it is also considered a decorative technique where the design is struck on metal by blows from a punch from the front of the ornament. Engraving is also a decorative technique. It is usually applied straight away after hammering and before shaping and soldering. It is achieved by working the surface of the metal with a sharp pointed tool named the graver. It gives a clean and sensitive line. Fusing is the technique of amalgamating two metal objects into one whole by melting with intense heat and using copper carbonate. The fusing technique is applied in order to make fine filigreed wires and small metal granules and shapes. Filigree is also considered a decorative technique. It may be performed by twisting and shaping the wire into delicate tracery to achieve different patterns. The patterns are then soldered to make them solid. The technique of granulation is the art of applying minute metal grains in patterns to a metal surface to produce a raised and three dimensional decorative effects. Granulation is seen to be one of the most difficult jewellery making techniques, as it requires the minute pieces of metal to be fused to another metal surface rather than being soldered to make a cleaner attachment.



## **Conclusion**

The history of jewellery in Saudi Arabia is full of missing pieces. The nomadic nature of many of those engaged in the making and wearing of traditional jewellery, and its role as a source of tradeable wealth has meant much of the jewellery has been lost. It is only through analysing regional jewellery styles and comparing them to the known examples of traditional jewellery that we can trace cross cultural influences in styles, materials and aesthetics across the Arabian Peninsula. This chapter has shown how the people of Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula were able to integrate elements of jewellery making from other cultures and civilizations, no doubt adapting to changing tastes and fashions. Arabs were able to benefit and employ what they observed from those different cultures and civilizations in the jewellery making. It can be said that traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia was based on a mixture of civilizations, as it was influenced by many cultures because of its important geographical location being the gateway to the East and West. So, the amalgamation and integration of styles has seen new designs, materials and techniques adapted and brought into local design.

This chapter attempted to give an overview of traditional jewellery making in Saudi Arabia. In addition, it presented the mostly used materials as well as the different techniques used in making traditional jewellery. The reason for this detailed research of traditional jewellery would help me, as a researcher and jewellery artist, better understand and analyse the designs, materials and techniques used by traditional silversmiths or artisans.

## **Chapter Two: Experimenting outside the traditional box**

## **Introduction**

This chapter presents a series of experiments, which I carried out during the first stage of my practice-led PhD project. In carrying out my experiments, I drew on my Saudi cultural background as a starting point. This stage was an opportunity for me to develop my ideas and concepts my thoughts keeping in mind that my research seeks to extend the conventions of vernacular traditional Saudi jewellery-making through the production of new works. My new works have incorporated alternate methods for combining Saudi traditional symbols and tested new approaches adopted and adapted from Western studio craft methods of cultural production to achieve new representations of contemporary Saudi experience. The influence of living in Australia for a total of almost ten years at different periods of my life, as an international student and later as a PhD researcher and spouse of a diplomat, played a major role in shaping my vision of jewellery design and making.

My experiments in this chapter are presented in two groups. The first group includes the replication of two traditional jewellery pieces. The reason behind the replication experiments was to enhance my knowledge and understanding of the making of traditional jewellery including their techniques and processes. The second group presents the design concepts I tested in my experiments and the techniques I have employed in undertaking my experimental exercises.

### **First experimentation group: Replication of traditional jewellery pieces**

The traditional jewellery pieces which were replicated were a multi-pendant necklace and a mace-shaped pendant charm necklace. I was relying on my memory of jewellery pieces that belonged to my family and which I could remember from my childhood. However, because I was living in Australia I did not have access to them. I therefore supplemented my memory by basing the replication process on photos taken from Ross' book entitled *The art of Bedouin jewellery: A Saudi Arabian profile*.<sup>110</sup> Ross was born in Australia and worked in Melbourne in the area of design and decor. She worked for the Saudi Arabian government in the late 1960's and early 1970's as a researcher, writer and radio presenter on Radio Riyadh's English Service. Ross' book was based on her personal collections of traditional jewellery.

The replication approach used in my study was influenced by Robert Baines' work.<sup>111</sup> On 25 September 2014, Baines visited the ANU School of Art and Design to deliver a public lecture. During Baines' visit, I had the chance to have a short conversation with him to talk about my PhD research project. Baines strongly advised me to conduct the replication experiments. He emphasized that replicating traditional jewellery would extend and deepen my view of the processes and techniques involved in their making.

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<sup>110</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 1.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Baines, *The reconstruction of historical jewellery and its relevance as contemporary artefact*, (Melbourne, RMIT University, 2005), 1.

Baines, as part of his ongoing research into and fascination with ancient jewellery techniques, reproduced an ear ornament originally from the ancient Greek city Madytos trying to replicate traditional techniques as closely as possible. The aim of Baines' research was to analyse historical jewellery and to construct copies based on the identified technology of the era. Later, the results of these analyses and reconstructions helped shape Baines' own designs in which contemporary aesthetics are informed by historical practice.

My main purpose of the replication of traditional jewellery pieces was to help me expand my thinking, vision and expertise in jewellery making in terms of their techniques and methods. In addition, I wanted to develop a better understanding of ornamentation in traditional jewellery making. I actually realized that viewing and examining original traditional jewellery or photos of pieces would not be sufficient. That was based on several attempts to examine and analyse traditional jewellery items and photos of a number of pieces. For that reason, I came to a conclusion that photos do not provide sufficient insight to the actual making of jewellery nor does looking at actual work, as they do not show the steps that traditional silversmiths have gone through. I wanted to go through the replication process to make myself more familiar with the different stages the silversmiths experienced in making the original pieces. I wanted to come into contact with all those stages starting from the design and moving on to the different hand-made techniques used, until reaching the final outcome. While I had experience with most of these techniques, I had not considered their use

specifically within the context of traditional jewellery. Here, I would like to emphasize that all the jewellery making techniques involved hand-made constructions only, and no machines were used. The tools were very simple and of the same type used by traditional jewellery makers. From this experience, I may state that it is possible that each silversmith developed their own methodology of jewellery making depending on their own skills, expertise and the availability of tools. Furthermore, replicating traditional jewellery pieces would definitely represent a challenge to any jewellery artist.

Another major reason for replicating traditional jewellery pieces was to become adept at producing high quality products for my study as a jewellery artist and researcher. I could only develop my ideas once I practised the traditional techniques. This allowed me to gain insights into and test the physical limits of some techniques and design motifs that can only be better gained by trying to imitate traditional silversmiths. As a result, it would be possible to learn the different processes that traditional silversmiths carried out. It would also give me the opportunity to understand the various techniques of their jewellery making. Replicating traditional jewellery would make me employ some techniques that I have not really practiced before by hand, as traditional jewellers used only hand-made jewellery techniques. My previous practice involved hand-made objects and my training had also utilised modern jewellery making machinery. I also wanted my future jewellery pieces (my outcome) to fulfil their purpose in being related to traditional jewellery, as the aim of this exegesis is to

study the history and making of that particular type of jewellery and introduce a new global approach in the making of jewellery in Saudi Arabia. While the approach proposed by this chapter is similar to Baines, who also carried out a replication of an ancient jewellery piece, the end goal is quite different.<sup>112</sup>

### **Referenced Artists**

#### *Robert Baines*

Robert Baines is a renowned Australian jewellery artist, goldsmith, scholar, and commentator on the field of contemporary crafts. Baines had the chance to conduct laboratory analysis of an original ancient Greek ear ornament from Madytos, which gave him a clear understanding of the precise components and techniques used in the original jewellery piece. Subsequently, he was able to start the replication process of the ear ornament.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I was influenced by Baines' replication approach. However, in my study, I only had one photo of each of the traditional jewellery pieces that were replicated. Traditional jewellery pieces in public and private museums were again only available for taking photos but not touching and comprehensive analysis. Therefore, the main intention of the replication was to advance my understanding of the art of Saudi traditional jewellery, its techniques and, thus, assist me in introducing the new designs suggested by my study.

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 16.



**Figure 55** Original ancient Greek ear ornament (Baines 2005).



**Figure 56** Replica of ancient Greek ear ornament by Robert Baines (Baines 2005).

### **Justification of choice of pieces replicated**

As mentioned earlier, I attempted to replicate two traditional necklaces, namely a multi-pendant necklace (see Figure 57) and a mace-shaped pendant charm necklace (see Figure 60). The two traditional necklaces were chosen to be replicated for many reasons. The first necklace reminds me of one of my grandmother's favourite old necklaces, which, unfortunately, does not exist anymore, as it was sold before she died more than thirty years ago. I was totally attached to my grandmother and used to hold and wear her jewellery, as she lived with us in the same house until she passed away. Being the youngest of her grandchildren, I was her much-loved as she always told me. She was an enchanting person who was admired by all members of our greater family, and people in our neighbourhood. She was a philanthropist and her heart, arms and doors were open to everyone who knew her or needed her help. My parents loved her so much that they named me after her. I will always remember my



grandmother as a genuine, strong, generous and sincere person. The second necklace was also familiar and I remember seeing more than one woman wearing similar ones when I was a child. Particularly, a friend of my grandmother who used to visit us always wore a similar necklace, as most women at that time only had one or two necklaces. When I saw the photos of the necklaces, they evoked a lot of important memories in me. All those memories were pictured in my head like a film and I remembered myself holding and wearing my grandmother's beautiful jewellery. Then, I thought that replicating these two particular jewellery pieces will not only serve the purpose of my research, but will also fulfil inner passion and emotions. Also, at some stage of my work, I thought of the replication experiments as a way to reduce the feeling of homesickness.

The reason for replicating a second necklace was that the making of the first jewellery piece chosen did not employ all the hand-made techniques used in traditional jewellery. Both the first and second necklaces are rare pieces and would fetch high prices today. Also, I chose these two necklaces because of their precise craftsmanship, as they display a wide range of hand-made techniques. In addition, I admired the bright metals with the selection of very strong colours in fine configurations.

### **First replication: Traditional multi-pendant necklace**



**Figure 57** A multi-pendant necklace (Ross 1998).



**Figure 58** Replication of multi-pendant necklace by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

### **Description of the traditional multi-pendant necklace**

The traditional multi-pendant necklace demonstrates many characteristics of traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia. Several hand-made techniques were used in making it including filigree and granulation. In this section, I give a brief description of the multi pendant necklace and will also depend on my memory in remembering a similar one which my grandmother used to wear. The necklace consists of the following constituent parts: a wool thread, 33 blue ceramic beads, 44 silver beads, 48 silver spacer beads, 23 silver balls, 2 mace-shaped silver closing terminal beads, 3 coin pendants, 18 long silver chains, 6 short silver chains, and 30 silver bells. The wool thread was used in the necklace to hold the glazed blue ceramic beads, silver beads, silver balls and silver spacer beads. Silver mace-shaped terminal beads are traditionally placed at the two ends of the

thread to lock the necklace. From the thread, dangles three coin pendants; a large main one in the middle and two smaller ones on its right and left. The main pendant was made from a Maria Theresa thaler coin with a turquoise stone in the middle and contains eighteen dangling silver chains with a silver bell at the end of each chain. The length of each chain is approximately five to seven centimetres long. The other two smaller pendants were also made from Maria Theresa thaler coins. Three shorter silver chains dangle from each one of the two coins. Each chain has two silver bells at the end. Coins were commonly used as pendants in traditional necklaces. Traditional silversmiths usually attached three to five to a strand. The most popular coin was Maria Theresa thaler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which is often so heavily encrusted with decoration that it can sometimes barely be recognized.

### **Replication processes of the traditional multi-pendant necklace**

The replication was an important experience which made me better understand how traditional silversmiths worked towards achieving their goals in making jewellery. The replication process went through several stages. A careful drawing of a sketch of the design was attempted. A drawing of the whole necklace was completed and then enlarged drawings of all the major constituent parts were completed separately. The drawings were done to display the designs of the different components and materials of the jewellery piece.

The main techniques used in the necklace were filigree, granulation, and chain making. Although, the original necklace was made from silver, I used copper for a number of reasons. The first reason was a pragmatic one. Copper is less expensive than silver, and as the replication was for the purpose of analysing and understanding the jewellery piece only, its use did not compromise my understanding of the object. Second, copper has similar properties to silver in terms of shaping and I could gain an appreciation of the skills required to create the pieces. Third, one can use all the silver jewellery techniques with copper and can get similar outcomes. Fourth, copper was used because we are not sure that all components of the original necklace were made from pure silver, as traditional silversmiths sometimes used other metals combined with silver. All the metal pieces were later plated in silver after they were completed in order to maintain the same look as the original piece.

A wool thread was used in the original necklace probably because it was one of the limited materials available and could be used in the past. Bedouins used to weave wool from sheep, camels and goats. Therefore, I used a wool thread as well. The thread was used in a similar way as the original. Its function was to hold the blue beads, copper beads, copper balls and spacer beads. Two copper mace-shaped terminal beads were also used at the two ends of the thread to lock the necklace in a similar way as the original necklace.

In the remaking procedure of the pendant Maria Theresa thaler coins, I started by imitating the coins. I managed to get recently minted Saudi coins but

preferred not to use them in the replica because it was only an experiment. Instead, I imitated them on copper sheets using the stamp technique so that all the metal components used in the replication of the necklace were made from the same substance (i.e., copper). The outcome was to a large extent accurate. In fact, the stamping technique that I used gave me satisfactory results.

It is worth noting that the photo of the original multi-pendant necklace illustrated missing silver bells at the end of a few chains. However, I decided to restore the missing bells in my replication. Also, some of the glazed blue ceramic beads slightly varied in size and shape in the original necklace, which was not the case in the replication.



**Figure 59** Processes of my first replication experiment, 2015.

## Second replication: Traditional mace-shaped pendant charm necklace



**Figure 60** A mace-shaped pendant charm necklace (Ross 1998).



**Figure 61** Replication of mace-shaped pendant charm necklace by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

## Description of the traditional mace-shaped pendant charm necklace

The mace-shaped pendant charm necklace is a representative piece of traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia. It illustrates many features of jewellery from this particular region of the world. Different handicraft techniques were used in making it. In addition, it includes a religious amulet (called *tameemah* in Arabic), which takes the form of a long pendant. A brief description of the mace-shaped pendant charm necklace will be presented based on a photo of the original necklace and my memory.

The mace-shaped pendant charm necklace consists of the following parts: a silk thread, 6 large sphere-shaped silver beads, 2 small-sphere shaped silver beads, 479 small red coral beads, 37 large red coral beads, a huge mace-shaped silver pendant charm, 6 large rhombus shaped silver metals, 7 small rhombus

shaped silver metals, 6 hand shaped hanging silver pieces, 15 silver chains, and 15 silver bells.

The silk thread was used in the necklace to hold the coral beads, the sphere shaped silver beads, the silver rings covered by the large rhombus shaped silver beads, and the huge mace-shaped silver pendant charm. From the mace-shaped silver pendant charm (the only pendant in this jewellery piece), dangles the silver chains with a silver bell at the end of each chain.

The main mace-shaped pendant charm is considered the main component of the whole necklace. It is made from silver and positioned in the middle of the necklace. The mace is a hollow cylinder with stripe filigree decorations on the outside surface. This type of pendant or amulet usually has religious significance. Amulets often have the name of Allah (God) inscribed on them. They also may be used as charm cases containing verses from the Quran. They were used as a form of protection from envy and evil eyes. Having only a photo of the mace-shaped pendant charm necklace, it cannot be verified whether the amulet pendant was a charm case or not because I was not able to physically get hold of an original piece. Another function of pendant cases, which has emerged in the last 50 years or so, is to put dried scented flowers or wood in them. This practice is still evident in some parts of Saudi Arabia, especially the southern region. The main mace-shaped pendant charm is attached to the thread by six rings covered by large rhombus shaped silver metals, most likely because of its weight and length. Each two rhombus shaped beads are separated by one large



red coral bead. As mentioned earlier, from the pendant charm, dangles fifteen silver chains with a silver bell at the end of each chain. The chains are attached to the pendant charm by seven rings. From each ring, dangles two chains, except for ring number four in the middle three chains dangle. Each of the seven rings is covered by a small rhombus shaped silver metal. Attached to the rings, except ring number four in the middle, are six-hand shaped hanging silver pieces and six large red coral beads. The hand-shaped hand or *khamisa*, which means number five in Arabic, is used in traditional jewellery to protect the wearer from envy and evil eyes.

### **Replication processes of the traditional multi-pendant necklace**

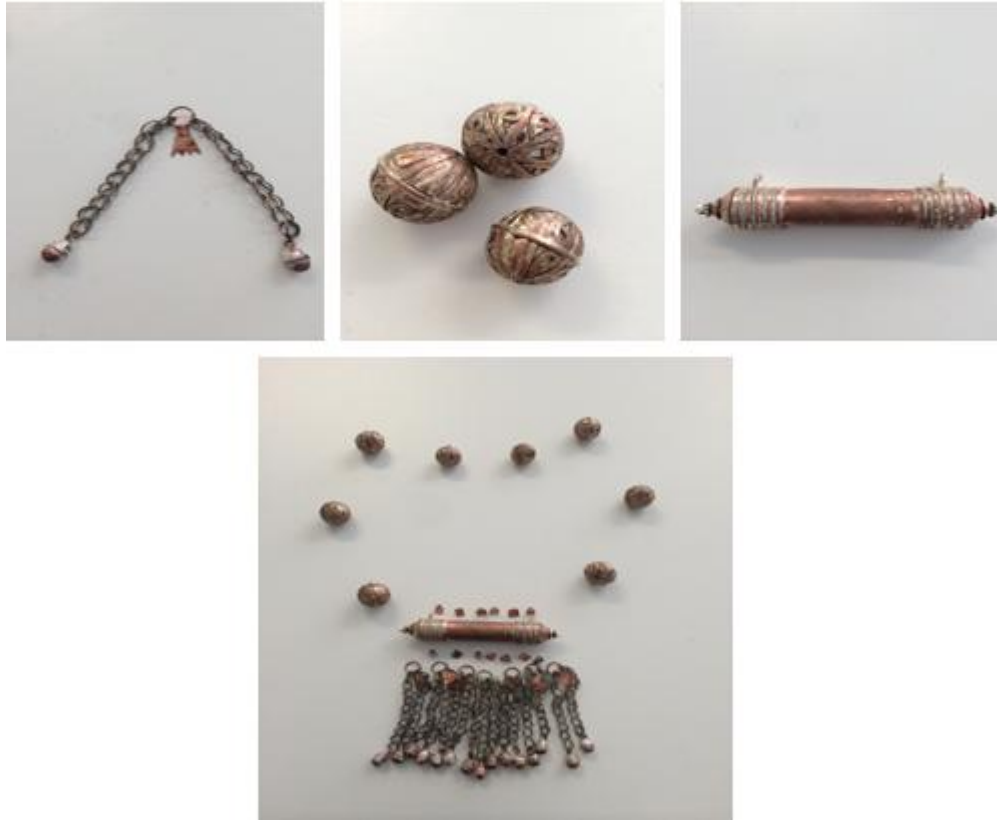
As was carried out in the first replication experiment, a drawing of a sketch of the whole design was done followed by separate enlarged drawings of the major components to illustrate the different parts and materials of the piece.

As mentioned earlier, the main technique used in the making of the mace-shaped pendant charm necklace was filigree. Other techniques that were used include cutting, hammering, and chain- making.



**Figure 62** Processes of my second replication experiment, 2015.

The metal used in the original necklace was silver. However, I used copper for the reasons outlined earlier. After completing all the metal components of the necklace, they were plated in silver. A silk thread was used in a similar method as in the original piece. Its function was to hold the coral beads, the sphere-shaped silver beads, the silver rings covered by the large rhombus shaped silver beads, and the huge mace-shaped silver pendant charm.



**Figure 63** Components of my second replication experiment, 2015.

Before attempting the two replication experiments, I was able to look at the two traditional jewellery pieces and identify the traditional techniques used in making them, such as filigree and granulation. However, until I practised employing those techniques myself, I would not have been able to understand traditional jewellery in the same way as traditional silversmiths do. During the experiments, I found myself learning through making the replications. My hands and all my senses were involved in the learning process and I realised that I was gradually getting more and more information about traditional jewellery-making and the methods of the artisans who make them. I was trying to do my best to get

immersed in every step I went through in making the replications. I would even sometimes leave the work for a day or two and return back to it with more insight and understanding. I have to admit that the replication experiments were not easy to conduct. I went through so many difficult moments and I sometimes had to redo some components. One of the challenges was to be able to remake the jewellery pieces in the same way as traditional silversmiths with simple hand tools. Another challenge was figuring out the suitable thickness of the metal sheets for the different components where I had to undergo a trial and error method. I believe the replication experiments helped me develop my view, skill, and jewellery making techniques and methods. I was able to expand my understanding of ornamentation in making traditional jewellery. I became more familiar with the different steps the silversmiths go through in making their jewellery. Thus, I felt that these experiments were complementing my view of traditional Saudi jewellery.

Consequently, my goal, as a jewellery artist and researcher, was not only to learn how to make traditional jewellery, but also to utilize some of the vocabulary and feeling of traditional jewellery in a more modern context. Therefore, I decided to proceed with my following experiments and start making different forms using different materials, as my aim is to create jewellery that would relate to traditional forms in a sense. In fact, the assessment allowed me to think about the way I can relate the perceptions achieved by replicating traditional jewellery to my research. In addition, I was able draw from traditional

jewellery and further my knowledge of the culture of jewellery in a Western context.

### **Second experimentation group: Design concepts and techniques**

This section presents the artistic design concepts and jewellery making techniques which I examined throughout the experiments that were conducted. The design concepts I focused on in my research were Islamic art and bricolage, while the main techniques I examined were filigree, granulation and saw-piercing.

#### **Islamic art concept**

After a long journey of replicating two traditional jewellery pieces, I made a decision that I had to analyse all the traditional designs I have come across. My analysis included the principles of design, which describe how the artists use the elements of art in their work. Having done that, I noticed that the results of the analysis were familiar even in the West. Islamic art designs include geometrical, floral and vegetal designs. The presence of designs involving geometric shapes and plants in art is common in many parts of the world dating back to Hellenistic times and has been known as Islamic art since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Annette Hagedorn and Bernadette Schenk, "Glossary," In *Islam: Art and Architecture*, eds. Markus Hattstein and Peter Delius, (Potsdam, H. F. Ullmann Publishing GMBH, 2013), 604.

I considered the Islamic art concept as one of the artistic design concepts which I wish to examine in my journey of shaping the outcome of my research for two reasons. Islamic art forms have been familiar to me since childhood. Every day, I woke up looking at those designs around me, as Islamic art designs were commonly employed in wooden windows in the Saudi Hejaz region, where I come from. The Islamic art design openings allowed sunlight to enter our house. I remember that I used to trace the designs on the floor with my finger and sometimes on a piece of paper using a pencil or pen. Hence, I have always had a relationship with Islamic art designs. The other reason is that Islamic art design is a well known form of art in many parts of the world including the West where my jewellery designs would hopefully be appreciated and valued.

### **Referenced artists**

My design experiments that included Islamic art designs were influenced by artists not only in jewellery but in other art fields as well. An example of an artist who influenced my work includes jewellery artist Hülya Öz.

### *Hülya Öz*

Turkish jewellery artist Hülya Öz started her career as an architect in 1994.<sup>114</sup> After practicing her profession for over 20 years, she shifted her focus to the design and making of sculpture and jewellery. Öz created the Zoya brand in 2014. Her designs are influenced by the historical architectural constructions, including geometric designs. Most of her pieces reflect her Islamic cultural background. Öz's work has inspired me because I believe she had the idea of representing her culture and identity through her jewellery, which is similar to mine.

In Öz's *Inside Ring* (Figure 64), she was able to make use of an Islamic art unit and re-create it in sterling silver. The saw-piercing technique used in the making of the *Inside Ring* matches my interest in removing metal for the purpose of reducing the weight of my jewellery pieces.

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<sup>114</sup> Hülya Öz, *Zoya Jewellery Istanbul Website*, 2014, 1.



**Figure 64** *Geometry of the Universe* brooch, an Islamic art design using sterling silver and quartz by Hülya Öz, 2014 (Öz 2014).

After the replication experiments, I studied different design concepts and explored the possibility of employing Islamic art designs in jewellery using different metals, such as aluminium, copper and sterling silver. Aluminium has been used in jewellery for a number of decades in the West. However, it has not been used in Saudi traditional jewellery. I chose aluminium because of its properties, which include low weight. The weight component was important since one of the features of traditional jewellery I wanted to avoid was the heavy weight. In addition, I wanted to use aluminium as a material that can be a bridge between the Saudi and Western cultures. Therefore, I used aluminium in my initial experiments, which consisted of six jewellery pieces: 1 pendant, 1 finger ring, 1 brooch, and 3 pairs of earrings. After that, I used copper and sterling silver.



Figure 65 illustrates examples of the experiments I carried out using aluminium which include Islamic art designs.



**Figure 65** Anodised saw-pierced aluminium pendant necklace and finger ring, experiments by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

The two Islamic art experiments in Figure 65 are a pendant necklace and a finger ring. They are both made from aluminium and feature Islamic art floral ornamentations. The techniques used in these experiments were saw-piercing and anodising. The reason for using aluminium in these experiments was to test the metal against the design and examine its ductility in the course of forming it into different shapes. Generally speaking, I was not totally satisfied with the aluminium experiments for technical reasons which I will discuss later when I talk about the saw-piercing technique.

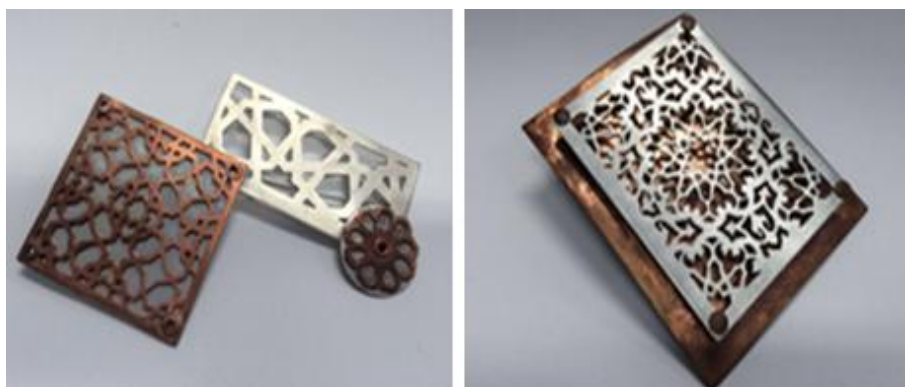
Another group of Islamic art experiments were made using sterling silver. The group included two brooches illustrated in Figure 66.



**Figure 66** Two saw-pierced sterling silver brooches, experiments by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

The two sterling silver brooches demonstrate geometric shape Islamic art designs, one of which was decorated with agate gemstones. The main technique used in the making of the brooches was saw-piercing. The other technique included was hammering which was applied to give the metal the desired wave-shape design. In my view, the wave-shape was an impression symbolizing movement and development, which is something I seek in my research. I chose to trial sterling silver because I wanted to explore its compatibility with the geometric patterns using the saw-piercing technique. The designs allowed light to penetrate the brooches' openings and create a harmonious relation between the jewellery pieces and the wearer. The sterling silver proved to be a perfect metal for Islamic art designs in my research.

After trialling a couple of materials separately, I decided to test the use of a combination of metals together. Figure 66 illustrates examples of these experiments.



**Figure 67** Islamic art designs (Left brooch: sterling silver copper and aluminium; Right brooch: aluminium and copper), experiments by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

In making the two brooches in Figure 67, I wanted to see the result of the integration of metals of different colours in the same jewellery piece and view the contrast between them. Hence, I made Islamic art designs that included sterling silver, aluminium and copper; and some included aluminium and copper only. In addition, I decided to test designs that include multi-layered metals. That was for the purpose of giving depth to the jewellery pieces.

In conclusion, Islamic art designs are interwoven with geometric patterns forming spectacular art work. Evidently, Islamic art is a well known form of art not only in the East but in the West as well, something I was not so aware of before studying in the West. That is the reason why I considered Islamic art as one of the artistic concepts that I employed in my experimental jewellery work and later in my final outcome jewellery pieces. I was completely satisfied with the results of my jewellery trials, as they gave me the sense of identity I was

seeking from the beginning of my PhD research, thus, it clearly relates to the Saudi culture.

### **Bricolage design concept**

The second design concepts I focused on in my research was bricolage. The term bricolage was first coined by the French social anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in 1966 in his book *The Savage Mind*. Lévi-Strauss used the term to describe the process of "making do with resources at hand" in a most literal meaning.<sup>115</sup> Knepper asserts that Lévi-Strauss does not see bricolage as "a deliberate project-oriented view, but rather as an adaptive mode of being in the world."<sup>116</sup> Louridas suggests that bricolage creates structures, in the form of its artefacts, by means of contingent events. He defines bricolage as "the creation of structure out of events."<sup>117</sup> Thus, bricolage is the integration of structure and event. Furthermore, Knepper suggests that bricolage is a form of interpreting and adapting existing resources to new situations or needs with a newly formulated result.<sup>118</sup> She then states that bricolage has come to be seen as a cultural process that could also serve as a model for expressing identity in a world that is increasingly globalized. Most significantly, Le Loarne defines bricolage by making analogies with the concept of creativity. She ascertains that basic

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<sup>115</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The savage mind*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1966), 16.

<sup>116</sup> Wendy Knepper, "Colonization, creolization, and globalization," *Small Axe Journal* 10, no. 3, 2006, 71.

<sup>117</sup> Panagiotis Louridas, "Design as bricolage," *Design Studies Journal* 20, no. 6, 1999, 521.

<sup>118</sup> Knepper, "Colonization, creolization, and globalization," 71.

definitions of the term bricolage seem very similar to those of creativity stating that both terms converge toward the same idea of resources' gathering, assimilation and re-combination to produce something new and useful.<sup>119</sup>

### **Referenced artists**

My jewellery experiments which applied bricolage were influenced by a number of jewellery artists. One of those artists was Betsy King.

#### *Betsy King*

Betsy King (b.1953) is an American jewellery artist who employs bricolage in many of her art works. Some of her jewellery is exhibited in museums and galleries including The Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas. King presents her narrative jewellery, which is supported with titles, in a way that expresses her ideas explicitly.<sup>120</sup> She portrays her work using a combination of materials and techniques.

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<sup>119</sup> Séverine Le Loarne, "Bricolage versus creativity what's the difference?," *Paper presented at the 24th EGOS Colloquium*, Berlin, 2005, 2.

<sup>120</sup> Helen Drutt English, and Peter Dormer, *Jewelry of our time: Art, ornament and obsession*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 182-183.



**Figure 68** *Trouble in Paradise* brooch by Betsy King, 1989, The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (Druett English and Dormer 1995).

The use of bricolage in my research is compatible with the above mentioned definitions and views. Therefore, bricolage, as an art method and practice, depends on availability of materials and resources in order to re-create innovating new outcomes. These outcomes may preserve some elements of traditional jewellery.

Figure 69 illustrates an example from the experiments I conducting employing the bricolage concept.



**Figure 69** *The Gate Memories*, a bricolage brooch, experiment by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).

The jewellery piece in Figure 69, *The Gate Memories*, was an attempt to explain an idea through bricolage. Here, I made a complex design by adding meaningful elements and symbols. I used several materials in making it, including sterling silver, copper and gemstones. The main component in the brooch is made from sterling silver and represents a gate. The gate was hand-made involving the two traditional techniques of filigree and granulation. In addition, the saw-piercing technique was used. Attached to the gate are gemstones, one of which was used as a base for a palm tree made from copper. The brooch presents a narrative about some of the events that took place in my childhood. *The Gate Memories* was an image of the gate of my house when I was a child. It holds many cultural memories. At the gate, we had a bench on which my father and grandfather used to sit. I used to spend lots of time playing

near the gate and hearing stories from my grandfather. I learned so much about our culture, heritage and important aspects of our identity. In making this piece, I was influenced by the bricolage work of Betsy King. I was trying to present a meaningful idea through a narrative supported by a title.

Early Saudi traditional jewellers made jewellery relying on whatever materials that were available to them, which is the same as the concept of bricolage. Therefore, I used bricolage designs only as an attempt to practise bringing together some of the techniques that I learned through my analysis of traditional jewellery and the replication experiments. In other words, I wanted to employ some of the traditional techniques in creating new forms of jewellery. Hence, I used the brooch form, which is not commonly used in traditional Saudi jewellery, and I also incorporated stones with new forms of settings. At the same time, I used the two traditional techniques of filigree and granulation as well as a new technique, which is saw-piercing. In addition, I used bricolage to present narratives about some of the events that took place in my childhood because I thought I might be able to integrate structure and events through bricolage.

Carrying out bricolage experiments resulted in jewellery pieces that are too complex and heavy. Therefore, I decided to simplify the elements in my following designs.



### **The filigree and granulation techniques**

Filigree is a decorative technique that may be performed by twisting and shaping the wire into delicate tracery to achieve different patterns. The patterns are then soldered to make them solid. Granulation is the art of applying minute metal grains in patterns to a metal surface to produce raised and three dimensional decorative effects. Granulation is one of the most complex jewellery making techniques that requires the minute pieces of metal to be fused to another metal surface rather than being soldered to achieve a fine attachment. Both filigree and granulation were commonly used in traditional Saudi jewellery, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and were techniques that I truly admire and have always wanted to apply to my jewellery work.

In March 2015, I attended two workshops hosted by the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop of the ANU School of Art and Design. The two workshops were taught by Thai visiting artists Puan Jiewthong and Taweesak Molsawat. One of the workshops was entitled "Filigree incorporating traditional Khmer techniques." It presented a unique creative and cultural experience of jewellery making to the participants. I was able observe and carry out the making of Khmer style filigree works and enjoy direct contact with Puan Jiewthong who is a prominent master of the technique and custodian of culturally significant knowledge that works produced using this technique represent. Interestingly, the workshop introduced the granulation technique as well. During the workshop, I realised that the Khmer filigree work is very similar to the Saudi traditional

filigree technique. Khmer filigree and granulation employment is used with silver as is the case with Saudi traditional jewellery. Today, Khmer metalsmiths have started to make gold jewellery in a similar way to their traditional silver jewellery using similar designs and techniques, which is like what is happening in Saudi Arabia. The similarities in the application of filigree include forming wires into various delicate patterns. However, based on my observation and analysis, Saudi traditional silversmiths tend to apply one layer of filigree, while Khmer silversmiths apply more than one layer. As for granulation, Khmer silversmiths apply each one of the granulation metal grains individually to achieve their required patterns, while Saudi traditional silversmiths apply them in a connected manner.



**Figure 70** Silver necklace (filigree and granulation techniques) by Puan Jiewthong (Molsawat 2012).



**Figure 71** Silver belt (filigree and granulation techniques) by Puan Jiewthong (Molsawat 2012).

Figures 72, Figure 73 and Figure 74 present examples of my experiments using the techniques of filigree and granulation. I will first start by presenting samples of my filigree experiments.



**Figure 72** Ring (sterling silver and beads), experiment by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

The jewellery experiment in Figure 72 illustrates a ring. The materials used were sterling silver and beads. The piece consists of a silver ring, a large silver bead (the main component), a small silver bead and silver chains and beads. The techniques used in making the piece include wire-twisting; and most

importantly filigree, which was used in decorating the two sterling silver beads. Following this experiment, I also made a necklace (Figure 73), which is another similar experiment that was carried with the same theme, but different function.



**Figure 73** Bead necklace (beads, sterling silver and silver coin), experiment by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

In making the necklace in Figure 73, I used beads, sterling silver and a silver coin. The necklace comprises a large silver pendant bead, a Saudi silver Riyal coin, and beads. The major technique involved in the making of the necklace was filigree, which was used in decorating the large silver bead.

The above two pieces were inspired by my experience in replicating Saudi traditional jewellery and the filigree experiments carried out in the Thai traditional jewellery workshop. However, I attempted to create the two designs from my own perspective.

In this section, I also wish to present my experiments using the granulation technique I employed.



**Figure 74** *Ring* (sterling silver and black crystal stone), experiment by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015.

The experiment in Figure 74 is a ring. The components are sterling silver and a black crystal stone. The main techniques used were filigree and granulation decoration. The idea of the ring was restructuring traditional jewellery rings by introducing new designs. Generally, my experience using the filigree and granulation techniques was rewarding. However, I felt that I was still in the experimentation stage and did not reach my ultimate goal of going beyond the convention in re-making traditional jewellery. Later, this led me to consider the saw-piercing technique, as it provides a different way of looking at jewellery.

### **The saw-piercing technique**

Saw-piercing is a common technique in jewellery and metal work. The technique is applied on sheet metal using delicate saw blades. After experiments

and research, I found that I not only liked but also enjoyed using saw-piercing in my designs and as a jewellery making technique.

### **Referenced artists**

My passion for saw-piercing was partially influenced by the art work of well known artists, such as Marian Hosking.

#### *Marian Hosking*

Marian Hosking is one of Australia's most prominent metalsmiths. Her unique work explores images from the natural environment through drawing, fabrication and castings techniques. Hosking has been making jewellery and small objects in silver and employed the saw-piercing technique widely.<sup>121</sup> She travelled and taught in India in 2004 during her academic life where she gained visual and cultural knowledge, which had an impact on her approach to jewellery making.

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<sup>121</sup> Kit Wise and Claudia Terstappen, *Marian Hosking: jewellery*, (Sydney, Object: Australian Centre for Craft and Design, 2007), 2.



**Figure 75** *India*, silver vessels by Marian Hosking, 2007 (Price 2007).



**Figure 76** *Banksia* brooch by Marian Hosking, 2001 (National Gallery of Australia in Canberra 2015).

Predominantly, the processes of saw-piercing and drilling are strong and major factors in Marian Hosking's practice. She drills and saws efficiently into silver sheets and produces metal work in texture which resembles fibre. I am fond of this technique and was highly inspired by Marian Hosking's jewellery and metal work in drawing my designs and making my jewellery pieces. The

saw-piercing technique reduces the weight of the jewellery pieces, which is one of the perceived disadvantages of traditional jewellery, as discussed earlier in previous chapters. The saw-piercing technique in jewellery making is carefully studied before drawing the design sketch, as in some cases piercing is used partially in the design, while in other cases the whole design may depend on saw-piercing.

Figure 77 and Figure 78 present a couple of examples of my experiments where I employed the saw-piercing technique.



**Figure 77** *Brooch* (sterling silver and gemstones), experiment by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).

The piece consists of two simple elements which are silver metal and agate gemstones. Here, my inspiration was based on architectural designs of old traditional houses in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia, as these houses are



characterized by different forms of ornamentation. These ornamentations consist of shapes such as geometric, floral and Arabic calligraphic writing patterns (see Figures 88 and 89). The purpose of the ornaments is to represent Saudi identity, history, culture and traditions. The techniques that I used in making this piece were saw-piercing and granulation.

Another example where I used the saw-piercing technique is presented in Figure 78.



**Figure 78** *Brooch* (sterling silver, copper and scented wood), experiment by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2015 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).

This piece was made using the following materials: sterling silver, copper, and scented wood. Here, my inspiration was also based on the architecture of old houses in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia. I was inspired by the design of windows. On these windows, you will see something that is like a box projected outwards. This box is made of wood and is called the ‘*roshan*’.

This wooden box-shaped piece is decorated and ornamented with different geometric ornaments and/or floral ornaments. The purpose of the wooden box was for ventilation and also so that the dwellers of the house can sit near it without being seen from the outside. This shows the significance of how something beautiful is protected and it is narrated to the new generation in an interesting way as each component of the piece has its own story. In this piece, I also used the traditional techniques along with saw-piercing.

When applying the saw-piercing technique, I discovered that there is a profound relationship between the hand and the mind in order to make a piece or achieve an idea or design. This forms a strong relationship between the artist and their work. This bond is formed because of the time spent, cautiousness, patience, accuracy and precision, so that there is no room for errors or mistakes. The effect of this relationship is obvious in my jewellery experiments and later on in my final work.

## **Conclusion**

The idea behind the experiments presented in this chapter was based on the assumption that they would help me better understand and analyse the designs, materials and techniques of jewellery making in general and Saudi traditional jewellery in particular. The experience of replicating traditional jewellery led me to develop my new approach in the design and making of

jewellery. Studying the history of the culture of Saudi Arabia through the culture of jewellery making was a rich source of inspiration, which guided me throughout my process of replication and analysis.

The replication process assisted me in partly answering some of the research questions of the study, in relation to traditional jewellery making techniques and the insights that can be gained, namely: "How can we draw from traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia to preserve and further our jewellery culture in a global world?"; "How can the approach, proposed by this study, express my understanding of traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia in a Western context (i.e., Australia)?"; and "What are the perceptions that can be achieved by replicating traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia?" These questions were answered throughout the discussion of the experiments presented.

After completing the replication of the first piece, the assumption that replications would help me better understand jewellery was proven to be correct. This was later confirmed after finishing the replication of the second traditional jewellery piece. Indeed, this approach helped me think in a way similar to that of traditional silversmiths or jewellers. In addition, I discovered that there is more than one way of doing things and solving problems when it comes to hand-made jewellery making. Each artist develops their own methodology and approach in making a jewellery piece and to overcome a difficulty or an obstacle they may

have encountered.<sup>122</sup> That may be deduced from the fact that traditional silversmiths work in simple workshops with basic handicraft tools. Moreover, traditional silversmiths do not have working manuals which may help them. In other words, there is no "one way" of doing their work. Replicating traditional jewellery pieces was not an easy practice and there are sometimes slight variations in size or shape of some components within one jewellery piece. Ross states that attempts at reproducing or copying most traditional jewellery pieces were unsuccessful because many of the embellishment techniques applied can be only achieved by the skilled and trained hands of the artisans themselves.<sup>123</sup> As a jewellery artist, I had to go through several attempts in making some of the parts of the two jewellery pieces replicated. There were cases where I had to re-do some parts. Therefore, I developed my own "trial and error" approach. In other cases, I discovered that there was more than one way of conducting a certain technique.

As for the other experiments, my goal was to explore the ways different designs, materials and techniques could be used within the art of jewellery making. Geometric units of Islamic art, with their unique characteristics, have become the most significant factor unifying all my explorations of various traditional and modern jewellery designs and techniques. Also, I am deeply

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<sup>122</sup> Al-Hasan, *Traditional crafts in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, 32.

<sup>123</sup> Ross, *The art of Bedouin jewellery*, 10-11.

attracted to the saw-piercing technique and find myself having great skills in employing it for more than twelve years.

After these experimental exercises, I was convinced that hand-made techniques were important because they allow the artist to be attached to each stage of the making process leading to the final outcome. Thus, I decided to create my jewellery by hand and employ different tools and equipment depending on my diverse cultural experiences and personal view and understanding of jewellery making.

**Chapter Three: From imitation and experimentation to  
re-creation and innovation: My final works**

## Introduction

Carrying out a practice-led doctorate research is not an easy task. In order for me to reach my final works, I had a number of successes and failures before I finally reached a certain point in my study where I felt more confident and secure about my research direction.

My jewellery work represents simplicity and complexity, tradition and contemporary. All of these terms played an important role in my research though they were just simple words to me at the beginning of my study. These words became extremely valuable to me and have a significant purpose behind them. The jewellery pieces I completed also show, in my view, how jewellery can be culture-specific and culture-free at the same time.

The approach I propose in my study perceives my role, as a jewellery designer and practitioner, to create jewellery that is visually attractive and highly wearable. Rajili et al., among other researchers, deem that jewellery designers and practitioners employ a number of principles in producing their jewellery items. They suggest that the principles consist of several phases, including "finding inspiration, exploring and generating ideas, and evaluating and translating ideas from sketches to end product".<sup>124</sup> I believe this is true and practical. In the course of my work, I have gone through these different stages.

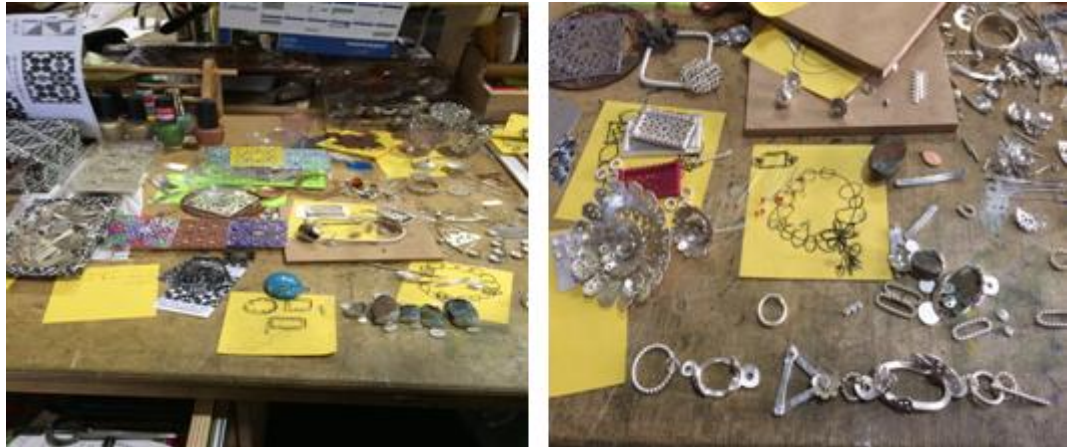
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<sup>124</sup> Noor Rajili et al., "Processes, methods and knowledge creation in jewellery design practice," In *ICoRD'15*, ed. Amaresh Chakrabarti, (New Delhi, Springer India, 2015), 304.

My work was inspired by traditional jewellery pieces of Saudi Arabia, as they were the base of my research, and was also inspired by contemporary jewellery practice. The inspirations emerged during the analysis stage, while the ideas were explored and generated during the replication and experimentation stages.

My research questions discuss deep concepts and notions. Every day I look at my bench and see all the details of my work after all those long hours, days and months spent there. Each and every part of my bench and what is on top of it and beneath it helped me shape and organize my thoughts and ideas. Many times I felt that my bench played the role of a mother in supporting me, as my mother used to listen to me and hug me when I am under pressure or facing a problem. I shared with her my sadness, joy, accomplishments and success. My mother was a safe refuge when I felt tired and suffered from pain. She was a second pair of eyes to me. She used to tell me her opinion about everything that I did. Now, because my mother is far away from me, I felt that my bench was very much like my mother. It was also like a close and honest friend that does not lie to me at all. Standing in front of my bench, which I consider my small world, my first research results appeared. It was a long tiring journey, but at the same time rewarding, as my bench assisted me in answering my research questions and achieving my aims.





**Figure 79** My work bench at the Gold & Silversmithing Workshop, ANU School of Art & Design.

I perceive that my study will attempt to answer the following research questions: "How can we draw from traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia to preserve and further our jewellery culture in a global world?"; and " How can the new approach to the design and production of jewellery, proposed by this study, provide an expanded and alternative approach for Saudi women that authentically represents their identity, culture and traditions in a contemporary globalised world?".

After carrying out the replications of the two traditional jewellery pieces and employing the traditional jewellery making techniques, new insights emerged. Using the different traditional techniques made me realise how complex they are. They require high skills in order to be able to be in full control of the tools and materials used. During the replication processes, I considered myself an artisan more than an artist. I felt that I was copying the two jewellery pieces without adding my voice. As a result of this feeling, I started to think

about my future designs, and how I can benefit from this experience and return to my position as an artist and creative thinker. Therefore, the replications were followed by my experiments using different designs and techniques.

### **Chapter overview**

The artistic and cultural ideas that will be presented in this chapter grew out of the work discussed in the preceding chapter, the replication of two traditional jewellery pieces from Saudi Arabia followed by several experiments employing different designs and techniques. The purpose of the replications, as stated previously, was to assist me in achieving a better understanding of the designs, materials and techniques used in the making of traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the experiments were meant to assist me in conceptualising a new approach, proposed by my study, in relation to Saudi traditional jewellery.

After the process of replicating the two jewellery pieces, I had to develop my experience in using traditional jewellery making techniques. This raised some new questions in my mind, such as: "Is it possible for an artist to express what goes on in their mind from their past and present experiences and influences?", "How can an artist link traditional ideas to modern ones?", and "How can an artist combine aesthetic (in their opinion) traditional elements of jewellery with modern ones in one art product?"

I came to a conclusion that an artist could produce unique pieces of jewellery using a combination of traditional and contemporary elements provided that they have the knowledge, freedom of expression and materials required. This conclusion was based on my experience, research, explorations and analyses of jewellery in general and traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia in particular. Needless to say, the designs, materials and techniques of traditional jewellery are somewhat limited. However, they relate the wearer to a specific society and culture and are part of their identity.

Traditional jewellery may sometimes seem simple in the first instance, but in actual fact it is complex. It could be sometimes simple in presentation, but complex in the techniques used, as traditional silversmiths only use hand tools and have limited equipment and resources.

In this chapter, I will present jewellery pieces that reflect my own perception of Saudi traditional jewellery in light of contemporary jewellery practice. The designs were a result of a thorough study and understanding of jewellery in general. The making also depended on my knowledge of jewellery making techniques. My idea was to develop traditional jewellery with the intention of making it possible to fit in a more widely global context. One way to achieve this was by employing hand-made techniques as a way to relate traditional aspects to contemporary practice. My aim has been to build a bridge between traditional jewellery and contemporary jewellery forms that would still allow the wearer to feel a connection to Saudi culture while also satisfying a

desire to be modern and urbane. The plan was to establish new unconventional jewellery designs, which will be based on artistic notions or concepts I am interested in, with the aim of introducing the new approach proposed by my study. The concept I focused on in my study is convertible or transformable jewellery, which has not been applied in traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia.

### **Convertible or transformable jewellery**

Convertible jewellery pieces have been made for centuries. Black states that convertible jewellery dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>125</sup> For example, cluster brooches were worn on top of the head or at the ear. Amanda Triossi's book *Between Eternity and History: Bulgari from 1884 to 2009, 125 Years of Italian Jewels* describes the history of Bulgari's jewellery and illustrates a number of examples of convertible jewellery.<sup>126</sup>

One way of looking at the concept of convertible jewellery is provided by Triossi. She describes the term "convertible" as jewellery that could be divided into different smaller elements and worn independently.<sup>127</sup> An example of a convertible jewellery piece by Bulgari is illustrated in Figure 80.

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<sup>125</sup> J Anderson Black, *A history of jewellery: Five thousand years*, (New York, Park Lane, 1981), 156.

<sup>126</sup> Amanda Triossi, *Between eternity and history: Bulgari from 1884 to 2009*, (Rome: Skira, 2009), 88.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 80** Necklace in platinum and diamonds by Bulgari, ca. 1938 (Triossa 2009).

Jewellery houses turned the concept of convertible jewellery into an example of virtuosic skill. The sides of the above necklace can be separated into two bracelets, two long plaque dress clips, and two small ones. The main pendant can be worn on a bangle as its centre piece, while the back clip can be worn as a brooch. This is a technique that uses releasable clasps attached to the back of the jewellery components in order to create a variety of different jewellery pieces. The skill refined involved in making the pieces convertible contributes to the value of the necklace.

Another example of a convertible jewellery piece by Bulgari is illustrated in Figure 81.



**Figure 81** Six attachable bracelets in platinum and diamonds by Bulgari, 1943 (Triossa 2009).

It illustrates six attachable bracelets in platinum encrusted with diamonds. They were initially made for the actress Anna Magnani in 1943. The bracelets in this convertible jewellery set can be worn separately or can be connected by clasps in whatever number the wearer desires. Alternatively, the bracelets can be attached and worn as a necklace.

Another description of convertible or transformable jewellery is presented by Anderson. She views convertible jewellery as jewellery that could be worn in multiple ways.<sup>128</sup> Black gives an example of Eleanor of Austria (wife of François I) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century wearing a chain in an unconventional way, which is over her shoulders rather than around the neck.<sup>129</sup> Anderson states that the concept of convertible jewellery was re-introduced by esteemed *maisons* such as Chaumet, Van Cleef & Arpels and Graff approximately at the beginning

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<sup>128</sup> Ase Anderson, "Transformable jewels, the ultimate in versatile style," *The Jewellery Editor*, October 2015, 1.

<sup>129</sup> Black, *A history of jewellery*, 159.

of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>130</sup> One of Van Cleef & Arpels' most distinguished designs is the Zip necklace illustrated in Figure 82.



**Figure 82** Zip necklace by Van Cleef & Arpels, 1950 (Anderson 2015).

The Zip necklace was made in 1950 and was based on an idea suggested by the Duchess of Windsor in 1938.<sup>131</sup> The convertible piece can be worn as a necklace or a bracelet. Also, the length of the piece is adjustable, as it can be worn short or long.

Convertible jewellery was a phenomenon since the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was designed to make jewellery more versatile. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, jewellery houses such as Bulgari and Van Cleef & Arpels made the practice of convertible jewellery into a real art form. These kinds of elite firms were making convertible jewellery for specific purposes, usually associated with making prestigious jewellery more wearable (e.g., a necklace that breaks down into a bracelet and brooches, or can be converted into

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<sup>130</sup> Anderson, "Transformable jewels, the ultimate in versatile style," 1.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

a tiara). As a jewellery designer and maker, I have worked with the idea of convertible jewellery for different reasons associated with customising and involving the wearer in the creative decisions behind wearing jewellery.

### **Reasons behind embracing the concept of convertible jewellery**

The main idea behind embracing the concept of convertible or transformable jewellery was mainly based on my intention to show my craft skills in making jewellery flexible and multi-purpose. Furthermore, I found the concept of convertible jewellery really resonates with my aims. Convertible jewellery is a good way to attract the wearer and get them to be involved in the aesthetics of the art of jewellery. The wearer of a convertible jewellery piece has the chance to choose the style that suits them and their body; suits the occasion where they want to wear the piece; and the garment they are wearing. Furthermore, it could be truly expensive to purchase and maintain a large collection of jewellery items. Therefore, convertible jewellery pieces or sets may have different functions and ways to wear them saving the person money.

Convertible jewellery resonates with my jewellery work because there is also a loose connection between traditional jewellery and its adaptability. Traditionally, women used to hand over silver coins from a necklace as payment for goods, but the form did not change. Thus, there is a connection between traditional jewellery that could be transformed in design as the number of component parts changed and my idea of multi-purpose jewellery.



Another more recent example of convertible jewellery given by Anderson is the Carousel collection by US based Gumuchian Jewellery (Figure 83), which includes necklaces that can be worn in different ways.<sup>132</sup>



**Figure 83** Necklaces from the Carousel collection by Gumuchian Jewellery (Anderson 2015).

Some of the ways these necklaces can be worn are presented in Figure 84.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 84** Different ways of wearing necklaces from the from Carousel collection by Gumuchian Jewellery (Michelle 2016).

As can be seen in Figure 83 and Figure 84, necklaces from the Carousel collection by Gumuchian Jewellery can be worn in different styles and positions. I was particularly interested in the concept of the belt, as this is one form of traditional jewellery in Saudi Arabia. The idea of creating flexible convertible jewellery pieces like this led me to apply the notion of flexibility in the designs for my final works.

Although, the concept of convertible or transformable jewellery was introduced in the West as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it is still considered new in Middle Eastern jewellery. I would assume that convertible jewellery pieces were present in Western jewellery houses in Saudi Arabia since the 1970's. However, jewellery making in Saudi Arabia was not influenced by that concept, as it still did not appear in the Saudi market. Saudi jewelers and silversmiths continued to produce pieces with only one function as was the case with traditional practice. For example, a necklace can only be worn on the neck in one way, a finger ring

can only be worn on a finger, a bracelet or bangle can only be worn on the wrist and so on.

### **Determining the potential of convertible jewellery**

The making of convertible jewellery pieces related to Saudi traditional jewellery presented a challenge to me as a jewellery designer and artist. It provided me with an opportunity to innovate on the forms of Saudi Arabian and Middle Eastern jewellery and to attract the wearer and get them to be involved in the aesthetics of the jewellery. Moreover, there was potential for creating a strong relationship between the piece and the body of the wearer. Therefore, I decided to start my project with a convertible set of five bracelets. I named the set *Turquoise Flowers* (Figure 85).



**Figure 85** *Turquoise Flowers*, a convertible jewellery set, by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016.

*Turquoise Flowers* is a convertible jewellery set made of sterling silver and original turquoise stones. It consists of five attachable bracelets that can be worn in several ways and at different lengths. The wearer can wear one or more pieces from the set as a bracelet or anklet; wear more than one piece as a necklace; wear more than one piece as a head piece; wear more than one piece as a belt or waist band; and/or wear one piece as a brooch.

In making this jewellery set, I included flowers in the design to represent the new generations who are the market for the work. I used original turquoise stones for their brilliant colour, which is highly appreciated in Saudi Arabia as well as many other cultures. I included simple units that are inspired by traditional designs and techniques. I employed filigree and granulation, but at a low scale and in new forms. I created new chain forms using loops of different styles and sizes, which was a way to avoid conventional traditional designs.

Examples of how the set can be worn are illustrated in Figure 86 and Figure 87.



**Figure 86** *Turquoise Flowers*, worn as a long bracelet, by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Monica Styles).



**Figure 87** *Turquoise Flowers*, worn as a long anklet, by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Monica Styles).

After completing my first convertible set, I was convinced that there is a vital bond between jewellery and the body of the wearer, as the wearer plays an important role in deciding how and where they place the jewellery piece on their body.

### **My final works**

After completing my first convertible set, I realised the potential that convertible jewellery had in involving the wearer in making decisions about how

and where they place the work on their body. I did not want my jewellery to be restricted to one use but to make them able to be used in multiple ways. Another feature of these works is the possibility to present them as artistic objects when they are not on the body. In designing these works, I saw that I was both influenced by my Saudi background and memories as well as the Western context I am living in at the moment. Moreover, my jewellery presents traditional jewellery in an unconventional way that may well be suitable in global and contemporary contexts. Therefore, my jewellery designs were inspired by traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia and were also inspired by new forms of Western contemporary jewellery.

The designs of my final works fall into two series: 1- The *Roshan* series, based on Saudi architectural forms; and 2- The *Tala* series, based on palm trees. Both themes are related to the Saudi culture. However, they are presented in a more contemporary fashion.

### **The *Roshan* series**

My designs were based on my personal perspective of the Saudi identity, culture and tradition in a Western contemporary context. My inspirations for the *Roshan* series were based on window designs of old traditional houses in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia, as these houses are characterized by ornamentation based on geometric, floral and Arabic calligraphic writing patterns. Thus, the word *roshan* in Arabic refers to this special form of architectural decoration. The use of architectural features in my work was to signify home. As demonstrated in Figure 88, *roshan* decoration is presented in the form of box-shaped windows projected outwards.





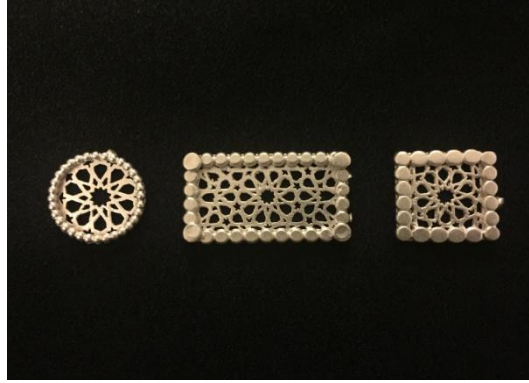
**Figure 88** *Roshan* architectural design from the outside (Alseraihi 2012).



**Figure 89** *Roshan* architectural design from the inside (Alseraihi 2012).

I reinterpreted the features of this architecture in the individual elements of my pieces as a way to present aspects of Saudi culture, traditions and history in a contemporary way to a new Saudi generation.

The *Roshan* series involves the integration of geometric shapes in different ways extending my interest in using forms based on the use of geometric forms in Saudi visual culture. All of the designs in the *Roshan* series include one or more independent units of this kind of patterning. The main technique used in making the units is saw-piercing. The units are bounded by a frame using the granulation technique (Figure 90).



**Figure 90** My three geometric design units used in the *Roshan* series (Photo taken by Khadeeja Althagafi).

The *Roshan* series consists of two convertible jewellery sets, two convertible chains, and twelve convertible cubic jewellery units. My final works representing this theme are presented below.

***Roshan Set 1:***

*Roshan Set 1* (Figure 91) is a convertible jewellery set made of sterling silver and consists of two attachable pieces, one long chain (115cm) and one short chain (28.5cm). The two chains can be worn in several ways. The wearer has the liberty to wear them as a necklace (of different lengths), bracelet, anklet, belt, head piece, or brooch.



**Figure 91** *Roshan Set 1*, a convertible jewellery set by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016.

*Roshan Set 1* consists of three main geometric shape units that represent the *roshan* architectural design (one rectangular and two circular units). The units are connected by chains of different ring sizes and styles in a new harmonious form that allows flexible movement of the components.



**Figure 92** *Roshan Set 1*, worn as a necklace (left photo) and as a head piece (right photo) by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photos taken by Monica Styles).

In the photo shoot session, which is an important part of the presentation of my work, I observed the emotion of pleasure when I handed over *Roshan Set*

*1* to one of the volunteer models. I then gave her the freedom to wear it in whatever way(s) and on whatever parts of the body she feels is suitable for her. Pleasure was evident on the model's face, as she started to wear the convertible jewellery set in different ways and on different parts of her body. As a jewellery artist, I noticed the clear bond that was established in just a few minutes between the model and the set. I enjoyed observing the pleasure that took place in front of me and this resulted in successful photo shots. I believe that one of the characteristics of jewellery is that it makes a person feel pleased when wearing it, and *Roshan Set 1* satisfies this criterion. In my view, a convertible jewellery piece would increase the pleasure in the wearer through allowing her greater control of how to wear it and thus reflect aspects of her personality. It would meet the desire inside a person to be creative and innovative. It would also cause the wearer to feel comfortable with her unique jewellery piece.

***Roshan Set 2:***

*Roshan Set 2* (Figure 93) is a convertible jewellery set made from copper and includes red agate beads. It consists of four attachable chains; one long chain (59cm) and three shorter chains (34cm, 31cm and 31cm). The chains can be worn in several ways. The wearer may wear them as a necklace (of different lengths), bracelet, anklet, belt, head piece, or brooch.



**Figure 93** *Roshan Set 2*, a convertible jewellery set by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).



**Figure 94** *Roshan Set 2*, worn as an anklet (left photo) and as a necklace (right photo), by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photos taken by Monica Styles).

Figure 94 shows how this jewellery set can be adapted to different body parts in several ways. I must note here that once again I gave the models the freedom to wear the jewellery in whatever way that they wished.

In the case of *Roshan Set 2*, I may say that I witnessed the feeling of satisfaction in the eyes and actions of the model who exhibited this convertible jewellery set. I saw that feeling contributing to the way in which the work is worn. It contributed to the wearer's self-esteem when she was wearing the jewellery set in different styles and on different parts of her body. Therefore, *Roshan Set 2* looks at satisfaction as another motivating human emotion. In my view, satisfaction can be a feeling of contentment that develops from a personal achievement or from having control over something that we admire. A woman may feel proud when getting hold of a convertible jewellery piece or set, which

allows her to wear it in various unique manners that suit her personality and taste. One can sometimes clearly see the feeling of delight in women wearing jewellery. To be engaged with this jewellery set was a cause for satisfaction not only to the model, but also to me as an artist. I believe *Roshan Set 2* was meant to be a universal convertible jewellery set that succeeded in creating a relation with a wearer from a culture different than the Saudi one.

***Roshan Chain 1:***

*Roshan Chain 1* (Figure 95) is a convertible jewellery chain made from sterling silver. The chain is long. Its length is 300 centimetres. The wearer can wear it as a necklace of different lengths, bracelet, anklet, belt, or head piece.



**Figure 95** *Roshan Chain 1*, a convertible jewellery chain by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2017 (Photo taken by Monica Styles).





**Figure 96** *Roshan Chain 1*, worn as a bracelet (left photo) and as a necklace (right photo) by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2017 (Photos taken by Monica Styles).

In making *Roshan Chain 1*, I took into consideration this vital quality. I made the chain long and flexible so that it may take the shape of the body of a person when worn. It created a harmonious sense of balance with the body of its wearer. This was apparent when the model wore the convertible chain on different parts of her body. This demonstrated compatibility and agreement between the model and the jewellery piece; and the relationship seemed like an orderly whole of complementing elements. Hence, *Roshan Chain 1* presents a perfect example of harmony between jewellery and the body of the wearer. I deem harmony is an essential attribute in human beings. It makes them live in peace with other people and objects. In my view, it is important for a person to build a relationship with the jewellery they decide to purchase and wear.

#### ***Roshan Chain 2:***

*Roshan Chain 2* (Figure 97) is a convertible jewellery chain made from sterling silver. The length of the chain is 109.5 centimetres. It could be worn in



several ways. The wearer can wear the chain as a necklace (of different lengths), bracelet, anklet, belt, or head piece.



**Figure 97** *Roshan Chain 2*, a convertible jewellery chain by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Monica Styles).



**Figure 98** *Roshan Chain 2*, worn as a bracelet/ring (left photo) and as a necklace (right photo), by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photos taken by Monica Styles).

The idea of attaching a ring component to a bracelet is used in traditional jewellery; however, I employed it in a new design that allows the component to be worn in different forms.

*Roshan Chain 2* reveals my appreciation, as a Saudi Arabian artist, of our established traditions and rich civilization. I admire the exquisite elements in traditional arts in general and learned greatly from analysing samples of traditional jewellery pieces. In designing *Roshan Chain 2*, I extended the idea of the traditional hand chain bracelet ring, which consists of one or more rings attached to a bracelet. My convertible jewellery piece may be worn on different parts of the body which makes it appear in a unique style that involves the wearer in arranging how the chain is to be worn (e.g., a necklace, waist band, etc.). When I completed this particular jewellery piece, I found myself very much attached to it, as it reminded me of my grandmother wearing the traditional

bracelet ring on different lovely occasions. All of those heart warming memories made *Roshan Chain 2* a convertible jewellery piece that involves a combination of my past and present. Having lived in a Western context for some time, I view it as a presentation of the past in a more contemporary style. It is an appreciation of the value of the past and a recognition of its qualities in a modern fashion. I believe *Roshan Chain 2* is enjoyable to look at, and even more enjoyable to wear.

***Roshan Cubes:***

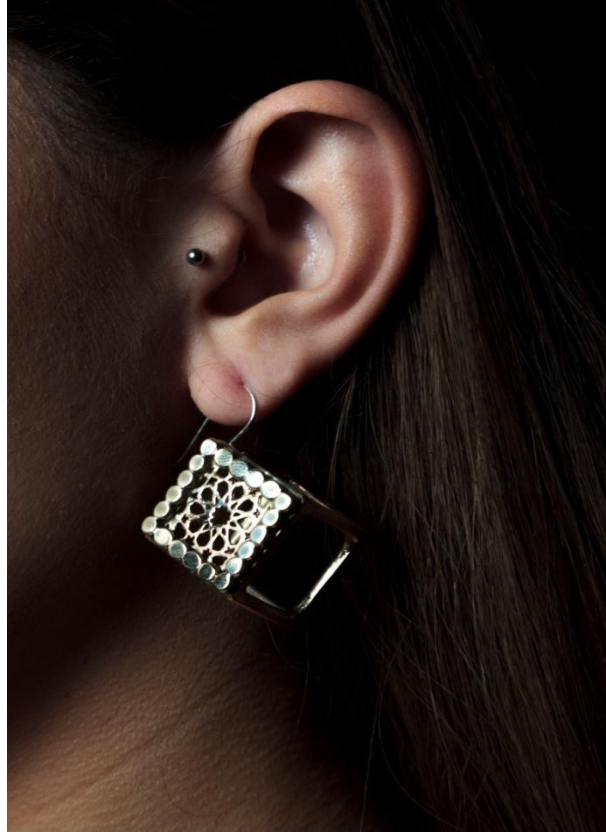
*Roshan Cubes* (Figure 99) is a collection of twelve convertible cubic jewellery units. They are made from sterling silver, copper, brass or bronze. Some units included a combination of more than one metal. Each unit may be used as a ring, pendant (when attached to a chain or thread) or earring (when attached to hooks).



**Figure 99** *Roshan Cubes*, a collection of convertible cubic jewellery units by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Monica Styles).



**Figure 100** *Roshan Cubes*, worn as pendants, by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).



**Figure 101** *Roshan Cubes*, worn as an earring, by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).

Here, I made designs that present *roshan* architectural forms in a contemporary style. *Roshan Cubes* convertible jewellery collection is an extension of my childhood memories. It presents an image of what I remember from the past about the place where I grew up and the experiences I had there. I consider the *Roshan Cubes* collection a process of reproducing what I have previously learned and retained from those experiences with different cultural and traditional aspects in my childhood. I still remember every detail of the delicate eye-catching *roshan* windows in my family's house and how I used to admire watching the sunlight come through their small openings. I see those

experiences as making me who I am right now. So I wanted to carry those good memories with me to the West and introduce my impression of the *roshan* windows through this convertible jewellery collection. I want the younger Saudi generations to be related to their past and experience these cultural sensations. I believe this work is a new version of a traditional aspect that would be suitable for women living in a modern world. The *Roshan Cubes* collection clearly conveys the message I wish to deliver through my research. That is, Saudi women can now wear modern jewellery that could be linked to their culture.

### **The *Tala* series**

The *Tala* series was inspired by the date palm tree. The word *tala* means a palm tree in Arabic. The date palm tree has been considered a valuable tree in the Arabian Peninsula since ancient times and is aesthetically, historically and religiously significant for Saudis. The palm tree even exists in the national emblem of the country, which signifies the generosity and vitality of its people.



**Figure 102** The date palm tree (yellow dates) inspiring the *Tala* series (Stephan Geisler 2016).





**Figure 103** The date palm tree (red dates) inspiring the *Tala* series (The goodness time: Harvest season 2015).

My inspiration here is a reference to the Saudi culture and traditions, which is a way to distinguish their identity from others. I suppose palm trees would, without doubt, motivate any Saudi artist and lead them to remember and appreciate hidden memories from their past and present. In my case, I grew up seeing palm trees every single day in my life. There were times when I climbed our palm trees to pick dates and eat them.

The use of the palm tree symbol in my designs was to suggest the memory of a particular heritage, but rejuvenated in modern forms. These compositions describe aesthetic values and new visions that result in distinctive convertible jewellery designs. I drew my designs so carefully that each work has a story of its own. My designs relate aspects of my Saudi background to a

Western context. Under the *Tala* series, I used geometric shapes, especially the circle. The components in each work create harmonious forms, generating a dialogue between them. The designs were made with small moveable components to create a jingling sound when they move, which may allow the jewellery to transform into charming musical objects, giving pleasure to both the wearer and the viewer.

The *Tala* series uses a main unit that takes the shape of a dome, which represents date clusters on palm trees (Figure 104). The designs in the *Tala* series include one or more independent units of this kind of patterning. The main techniques used in making the units are saw-piercing and filigree.



**Figure 104** The main unit used in the *Tala* series (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).

The *Tala* series consists of one convertible jewellery set and two convertible jewellery chains. My works representing the *Tala* series are illustrated below.

***Tala Set 1:***

*Tala Set 1* (Figure 105) is a convertible jewellery set, which is made from copper and includes red and green artificial beads. *Tala Set 1* consists of two attachable pieces, a long chain (117cm) and a short one (58cm). The two chains could be worn in several ways. They could be worn as a necklace (of different lengths), bracelet, anklet, belt, head piece, or brooch.



**Figure 105** *Tala Set 1*, a convertible jewellery set by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).



**Figure 106** *Tala Set 1*, worn as a bracelet (left photo) and as an anklet (right photo), by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photo taken by Monica Styles).

The chains in *Tala Set 1* consist of units that symbolize date clusters on palm trees. The design allows the units to freely move on the body of the wearer in a manner similar to date clusters on trees.

*Tala Set 1* is a convertible jewellery set that explores the notion of identity and its relationship with the wearer and possibly the viewer. It is clear that each individual may have their own characteristics that determine who they are and what unique qualities they possess. In addition, identity may also refer to the distinguishing qualities of a society that make them different from other societies. The same thing may apply to jewellery, as it can relate a person to a specific culture. However, the way this identity is expressed may differ from one individual to another and from one jewellery designer/maker to another. What is different in my case is that it signifies the distinct Saudi identity and at the same time allows the wearer to express a sense of their own personal identity by

means of being able to wear the convertible jewellery set in the way(s) they desire and on whatever part of body they wish. Of course, this personal identity presented by the wearer could possibly be influenced by other cultures, which is a point that supports the idea of globalization of the arts.

***Tala Chain 1:***

*Tala Chain 1* (Figure 107) is a convertible jewellery chain made from sterling silver and includes red agate beads. The length of the chain is 154 centimetres. It could be worn in several ways. Like the *Roshan* series, the wearer can wear the chain as a necklace of different lengths, bracelet, anklet, belt, or head piece (Figure 108).



**Figure 107** *Tala Chain 1*, a convertible jewellery chain by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2017 (Photo taken by Monica Styles).



**Figure 108** *Tala Chain 1*, worn as a belt (left photo) and as a bracelet (right photo), by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2016 (Photos taken by Monica Styles).

Of all the works in the convertible jewellery project, *Tala Chain 1* was the most successful in terms of eliciting interaction between the wearer and the work. I observed a noticeable interactive relationship between the model and *Tala Chain 1* when the photographer was taking the photo shoots. This interaction is inspiring and sophisticated. It was initiated, I believe, as soon as the model saw the jewellery piece. When she put *Tala Chain 1* on different parts of her body, the actual interaction started. It was an attractive and exotic relationship and I believe she received it particularly favourably. The movement of the constituent units of *Tala Chain 1* by the model caused a charming jingling sound, which is something that is also associated with traditional jewellery. Another form of relationship or action, which is a one-way interaction, was also created between *Tala Chain 1* and viewers who did not get a chance to wear the convertible jewellery piece. A feeling of positive reception developed between the rest of the models (who exhibited my other works) and *Tala Chain 1*. Thus,

this other type of relationship complements the whole picture and shows the stimulating interaction effect.

***Tala Chain 2:***

*Tala Chain 2* (Figure 109) is the second convertible jewellery chain in the *Tala* series, which is also made from sterling silver and includes yellow agate beads. The length of the chain is 136 centimetres. Again, it could be worn in different styles. The chain could be worn as a necklace of different lengths, bracelet, anklet, belt, or head piece.



**Figure 109** *Tala Chain 2*, a convertible jewellery chain by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2017 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).





**Figure 110** *Tala Chain 2*, worn as a belt (left photo) and as a necklace (right photo), by Khadeeja Althagafi, 2017 (Photo taken by Matthew Kwan).

*Tala Chain 2* is a convertible jewellery piece that promotes the concept of movement in wearable jewellery. It challenges the more common notion of jewellery as having a static or fixed position on the body. *Tala Chain 2* jewellery enables a very specific experience for the wearer through its versatility and its capacity to move on the body. *Tala Chain 2* combines three chains of different forms and lengths, so that it may produce a unique movement when worn. The design was made to ease the movement of the three chain components of *Tala Chain 2*. The apparent movement of the chains over the body of the wearer provides a distinguishing and exceptional look. This was obvious when the chain was presented by the model. Every time the model wore *Tala Chain 2* in a different way or walked, it created a different movement. I consider this movement a progressive development in my jewellery. The movement feature in my jewellery was taken from kinetic elements of Saudi traditional jewellery, but

I have developed this in my work so that movement is generated in every constituent part of the jewellery piece, which offered a harmonious motion over the body of the wearer.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the third stage of my research, which was to test different design concepts and techniques, based on knowledge I acquired through replication and experimentation with traditional Saudi jewellery making techniques. Out of this process, I developed a vocabulary for my final body of work for this research.

The final body of work has allowed me to argue that Saudi traditional jewellery is a living tradition that can be rejuvenated by introducing new concepts and forms that draw on traditional styles. The key point that I learned from undertaking this study was that it is possible to integrate some of the elements of traditional jewellery with contemporary ones that I acquired in the West. My final jewellery works emphasised a focus on the use of hand-made techniques, which was a way to link traditional Saudi jewellery with contemporary jewellery forms. At the same time, I adapted Western jewellery forms through the use of techniques and design motifs that would be familiar to a Saudi audience to develop convertible jewellery as a proposition for an expanded vision for traditional Saudi jewellery.

As my practice and research developed, I realized that, through re-introducing traditional styles in a contemporary fashion, my work could appeal not only to Saudi women but have global appeal as well. Thus, my final jewellery pieces reveal my personal insight of Saudi Arabian traditional jewellery in view of the studio practice of Western contemporary jewellery. I believe that my final works managed to connect traditional jewellery and contemporary jewellery forms. The convertible jewellery pieces presented in my research were successful in making the wearer realise and appreciate an association with the Saudi jewellery culture and tradition. This was observed throughout the photo sessions involving eight models from different cultural backgrounds. Therefore, I came to a conclusion that the concept of convertible jewellery actively involves the wearer in the artistic choices of wearing jewellery.

## **Conclusion**

The entire PhD experience seems to be like a story or even a long novel. The incidents that made up the story relate to each other in a sequence of events. To be precise, I left my house on a typical cold Canberra winter day and went to my university. I was admiring the weather; the formation of the gray and white clouds, the acceleration of the cold winds, and their stings on my face. I was admiring the shaking of the trees too and the rustle they make. It was as if they were singing and dancing for me. On that particular day, I accepted the challenge from the beginning of my presence here in Canberra. That day, I felt that each entity that I passed by spoke to me in some way. Even the ground was literally telling me "I am proud of you." This feeling was probably because I am away from my country and greater family. I entered my college building and went to the cafe to take my usual coffee with that wonderful special aroma. I spoke to the very nice and lovely barista, Elizabeth, who later became a good friend in my study voyage. Then, I went to my secret haven, which is my working bench or my creativity workplace. I perceive my place of work as my sensible mind that helped me shape my ideas. This is how I view my bench and the whole workshop in which I work. This is the way I see every piece of paper I draw my designs on; material and tool I use; and experiment I carry out. I share beautiful memories with all of those elements. Successful experiments motivated me, while unsuccessful ones made me stronger and helped me to continue my research.

I took a sip of my coffee and started to review in my head everything that took place with me on this working bench. I felt that it was like a movie played in front of me from the beginning of my study in February, 2014 until now. I also started to think of how I travelled to another country in terms of its different environment, traditions, customs, food, people, etc. The first day I spent in this workshop began to flash in my eyes. I had a feeling of alienation and lack of adjustment and adaptation, especially because I was the only full-time doctoral student who was studying at the Gold and Silversmithing Workshop. At that point, it was difficult to adapt to the environment, people, and study all at the same time. Nevertheless, despite the harsh trials and difficulties that I faced in the first year, they all disappeared from my sight and mind and became memories. At a later time, I realised that I learned a lot from them. Then I began the transition phase in my academic life and established the future direction for my PhD research and, consequently, its boundaries and limitations. Indeed, it was an exciting and fruitful experience, which included the historical background, the literature review, the analysis of traditional jewellery, and the replications of two traditional jewellery pieces. Then, I started the exploration stage through trials and experiments in terms of designs and techniques until I finally got to the stage of my final works.

The aim of this study and accompanying exhibition has been to establish a new form of jewellery that is based on traditional forms generally for a contemporary Saudi Arabian audience. Through incorporating traditional

elements and juxtaposing them with new contemporary designs, it is hoped that a market for those practical and aesthetic works will be encouraged. In my view, this would rejuvenate a tradition that is threatened to be lost, as well as relate the Saudi audience to their culture, heritage and traditions. The new approach presented in this study was an attempt to show that jewellery that could be worn by Saudi women may be one of the strongest ties to their past and at the same time may be modern and contemporary. That is to prove that Saudi women will not necessarily turn their backs on the past. This new approach will allow Saudi women to wear jewellery that will enhance their appearance in a global world where beauty and fashion are essential. The mix between the traditional forms and the modern and contemporary ones gives this new approach a unique style and identity.

Before starting my practise-led research, one of my biggest challenges was the expectations of some of my colleagues and friends in Saudi Arabia and Australia about my future direction and art jewellery. They expected me to fit into typical conventional designs. Many of them told me that it would be more appealing and rewarding if I could present traditional jewellery in its original forms in galleries. They believed that there would be a large demand for my work being a jewellery artist and academic. My colleagues and friends could have been correct, but I decided to focus on pushing the limits and exploring the opportunities.

As my PhD was a practice-led research, it was based on artistic practice and research on traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia. It involved my personal analysis and interpretation of this type of jewellery. The interaction between research and jewellery practice was distinctive. By way of this integration, further dimensions were added to creative artistic application.

Like many jewellery artists, I attempted to examine a range of artistic concepts, designs, and jewellery making techniques. Consequently, the experimenting process led to distinctive methods of designing and making of jewellery employing concepts and techniques which are considered new to traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia. The experimenting method, which was mostly based on a trial and error approach, assisted me in clarifying the key points and questions of my research.

In the attempt to achieve my new approach associated with traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia, I started my work by replicating two Saudi traditional jewellery pieces. The replications were then followed by a number of experiments, which later led to the final works of my practice-led research. The assumption I had in mind was that the replication and hand-made re-production of traditional jewellery pieces would help me, as a jewellery artist, better understand and analyse the designs, materials and techniques that have been used by traditional silversmiths in Saudi Arabia. It also provided me with information about the various civilizations which influenced or resembled Saudi traditional



jewellery. The information was detailed and offered knowledge on how certain elements were possibly introduced to Saudi traditional jewellery, and from where they came. Both the study of traditional jewellery and the replication of the two jewellery pieces directed my perception of a broad description of traditional jewellery. Thus, I view traditional jewellery as a mirror to diverse cultures at different eras, which humans have experienced, throughout decorative objects worn for personal adornment.

The key point learnt from conducting the experiments was that it is possible to integrate some of the elements of Saudi traditional jewellery with modern ones. Hence, I considered the elements of traditional jewellery and challenged the way in which I may view and respond to my new designs. It was motivating to make the various experimental designs because the results were innovative and stimulating. As the practice and research developed, I realized that I had a desire to show Saudi traditional jewellery to the world by re-introducing it in a modern and contemporary fashion. In summary, the experiments that I carried out were characterised by focusing on hand-made techniques, which was one way to link tradition with modernity. The experiments provided me with the opportunity to see Saudi traditional jewellery through a modern re-introduction. In the experimentation stage of my research, I followed a pattern of increasing complexity in order to answer the research questions of the study. This later assisted me in reaching the final works of my research.

In making my final convertible jewellery pieces, I found myself inspired by a number of artistic and sentimental elements that relate each piece with the wearer, namely pleasure, satisfaction, harmony, appreciation, childhood memories, identity, interaction, and movement. These elements stimulated my final works and were evident in all of my jewellery pieces. My final works have demonstrated methods of conveying the affective characteristics of jewellery and their relationship with the body of the wearer. In other words, it is a way to show how visual language can create a dialogue between jewellery and the wearer.

To sum up, this study focused on the advancement of traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia. In addition, it was an attempt to preserve the art and encourage jewellery practitioners and researchers to conduct experiments with new designs, materials and techniques. This project focused on the consideration of new designs and techniques for re-producing and rejuvenating Saudi traditional jewellery.

Possible areas for further investigation have become evident throughout this study. I believe my new approach provides an opportunity for researchers, jewellery practitioners, and jewellery students to perceive the potential of such methodology presented by my study, which is based on both traditional and contemporary backgrounds. My research may be employed in the education of jewellery students in Saudi Arabia, as it provides an understanding of traditional Saudi jewellery. Moreover, jewellery students, researchers, and practitioners

might possibly benefit from using the information provided by my research to advance techniques and create new jewellery styles. Thus, the study has drawn attention to the need for investigations of this kind. Other areas that could be further explored may include the following: 1- Further research could be conducted in the field of Saudi traditional jewellery. To the best of my knowledge, there has been insufficient research which has led to the preservation of this type of traditional art until now. 2- Schools of art could adopt and support programmes sponsored by the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts, as one of their main duties and responsibilities is to preserve and promote the culture and traditional arts of Saudi Arabia. Similarly, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage has approved a national strategy for the development of traditional handicrafts, including traditional jewellery making, which is a vital part of a general strategy for the development of the national tourism in Saudi Arabia. Hence, organizing workshops and exhibitions may help in promoting traditional Saudi jewellery.

In conclusion, I may possibly summarize the contribution of my research to knowledge as follows:

1- My practice-led PhD research contributes to the preservation and development of the traditional jewellery of Saudi Arabia, by introducing new forms that draw on traditional values.

2- My study outlines detailed knowledge on the art of Saudi Arabian traditional jewellery.

3- My final jewellery works present a reconsideration of the value of Saudi traditional jewellery in the light of contemporary studio practice.

4- My research promotes an appreciation of traditional Saudi jewellery, which is conveyed through my position as a jewellery artist and practitioner.

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